

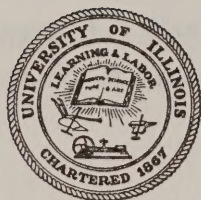
PR 2248

.M72

ILLINOIS STUDIES IN LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

VOL. XXIX

Nos. 2-3



PUBLISHED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
URBANA, ILLINOIS

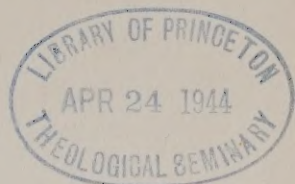
BOARD OF EDITORS

WILLIAM A. OLDFATHER

HARRIS F. FLETCHER

CHARLES A. WILLIAMS

JOHN DONNE
HIS FLIGHT FROM MEDIAEVALISM



BY
MICHAEL FRANCIS MOLONEY

THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS PRESS
URBANA
1944

TO MY MOTHER

FOREWORD

THIS STUDY, save for certain revisions, was submitted as a doctoral thesis to the English faculty of the University of Illinois in June, 1939. As one in a long list of recent studies of John Donne, it is essentially an effort at evaluation—perhaps revaluation—of one of the most significant figures of the late English Renaissance. Nothing new has been here added to the materials of the Donne legend. Whatever of freshness the study may have comes from what I believe to be an original approach to the interpretation of familiar matter. Perhaps this will sound presumptuous since a decade ago on the occasion of the tercentenary of Donne's death, T. S. Eliot declared that the Donne vogue had reached its apogee—" . . . Donne's poetry is a concern of the present and the recent past, rather than of the future."¹ Coming from one of the most significant and suggestive of modern critics of Donne, Eliot's statement would seem final and definitive, and yet Donne will not down. If, indeed, as a fructifying influence on other poets he is less to be reckoned with than he was in the earlier years of the century, he definitely retains his attraction for scholars and students of literary history.

Criticism of Donne has covered a wide range since his modern revival was begun by Grosart's edition of the 1870's. At one extreme stands the facile judgment of Courthope who, with typical nineteenth century self-assurance, was content to study Donne through nineteenth century eyes. At the other stands that of Mary Paton Ramsay whose French dissertation, *Les doctrines médiévales chez Donne*, appearing in 1917, advanced the rather startling theory that Donne was a true child of the Middle Ages and that he was to be understood only by tracing his origins to their mediaeval sources. The abyss which separates the critical position of Miss Ramsay from that of Courthope is to be explained only by the recognition of an irreconcilable divergency between their respective evaluations of the civilization to which Donne was heir. The heart of that civilization, of course, was the Thomistic philosophy, the resurgence of which in the twentieth century has been described by A. E. Taylor:

If an educated Englishman had been asked a hundred years ago who are the great original philosophical thinkers of the modern world, what answer

¹ "Donne in Our Time," *A Garland for John Donne*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1931, p. 5.

would he have been likely to give? His list of names would, no doubt, have depended partly upon his personal preferences, but there are some philosophers whom he would have been sure to mention. He would certainly have named Descartes, Locke, and Hume, and almost certainly Francis Bacon, then all the more admired because the real character of his theories in logic was so little understood. A widely read man would probably have given the names of Leibniz and Spinoza and the few who had any knowledge of German literature would no doubt have added that of Kant. It is almost certain that no mention would have been made of St. Thomas or any of the great schoolmen of the thirteenth century. The current estimate of them is indicated by the remark made in 1828 by Macaulay that "we extol Bacon and sneer at Aquinas." If the same question were put today, there would still be individual variations in the answers, but there are some names which would be contained in them all, and I think it safe to say that among these would be that of St. Thomas. We are not to-day all of one mind in philosophy any more than our great-grandfathers were, and I do not know that it is desirable that we should be. But if we are not all of us professed Thomists, we are all, I believe, agreed to recognize in St. Thomas one of the great master philosophers of human history whose thought is part of the permanent inheritance of civilized Europeans and whose influence is still living and salutary.²

My own study of Donne owes much to Miss Ramsay. That she has rendered an invaluable service by showing in a scholarly way how much of Donne's thought is purely mediaeval is, I think, undeniable.³ The tendency of too many English and American critics has been to minimize the extent to which the men of the English Renaissance still moved in the mediaeval orbit. Still, I do not feel that Miss Ramsay's insistence upon Donne's thorough-going mediaevalism is entirely sound. I see in him rather a significant transitional figure, perhaps the most typical in the realm of English poetry, in an age when the world of the Middle Ages was receding and Renaissance Humanism was rising to domination. Donne was not perturbed, as Courthope thought, by the advent of the new astronomy of Copernicus, Kepler, and Galileo; on the contrary, I believe that Donne, like others after him, was quite unaware of any threat to the permanence of his philosophical universe in the new heliocentric theories. But in a more significant way Donne did break finally and irretrievably with his mediaeval heritage. It is on the infinitely important matter of aesthetic motivation that Donne rejects the synthesis of Aquinas and casts his lot with the naturalism of the New Age. In the aesthet-

² *Philosophical Studies*. London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1934, pp. 224-225.

³ Eliot, on the contrary, thinks that her dissertation "promulgates opinions about Donne which . . . we have outgrown." *Op. cit.*, p. 4.

ics of Donne is to be found that fundamental division between the intellect and the emotions, between thought and sense, which was to be carried to its extreme manifestation in Neo-classicism,⁴ but which was to remain a distinguishing trait of English poetry.

Needless to say, no man, and above all no poet, could experience the conflict between two such antithetical schools of thought without being permanently marked by it. Such originality as my dissertation may possess is due to an effort to trace in the troubled soul of the poet the causes and the consequences of that conflict.

My debt to numerous modern critics of Donne, other than Miss Ramsay, particularly to Professor Grierson, will be evident to any reader of my essay. Since my basic problem was not a textual one I have not hesitated to rely upon Professor Grierson's edition of the poems, which, despite issue to be taken from time to time⁵ will likely remain the standard text.

There remains the pleasant duty of acknowledging my indebtedness to Professors Harris F. Fletcher and Harold N. Hillebrand of the English faculty of the University of Illinois. For Professor Fletcher's trenchant yet genial criticism, based upon patient reading of my manuscript while it was still in the amorphous state, I can of course offer no adequate return; it is, however, scant justice to say that many of the ideas here expressed owe their origin to that criticism. To Professor Hillebrand also I wish to express my thanks for suggestions which have been incorporated into my work.

⁴ Cf. A. H. Nethercot, "The Reputation of the 'Metaphysical Poets' During the Age of Johnson and 'The Romantic Revival'," *Studies in Philology*, Vol. XXII (1925), p. 132.

⁵ Vide George Williamson, "Textual Difficulties in the Interpretation of Donne's Poetry," *Modern Philology*, Vol. XXXVIII (1940), pp. 37-72.

CONTENTS

I. THE LIFE AND TIMES.....	13
II. THE MIND OF DONNE: THE NEW SCIENCE.....	47
III. MEDIAEVAL SYNTHESIS AND RENAISSANCE DICHOTOMY .	69
IV. DONNE AND THE RIVAL IDEALISMS.....	105
V. THE HEART OF THE STRUGGLE.....	129
VI. DONNE'S MYSTICISM.....	165
VII. IN THE WAKE OF DONNE.....	196
VIII. SUMMARY.....	210
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	214
INDEX.....	221

CHAPTER I

THE LIFE AND TIMES

FOURTEEN YEARS before John Donne was born in London, the daughter of Henry and Anne Boleyn ascended the throne of the Tudors. Sixteen years after his birth a storm-shattered Armada failed ignominiously in its assault upon England. Fifteen more electric years passed and the titian-haired queen was gone, and in her stead ruled the temporizing Stuart from across the northern border. Those three dates and all that transpired between them were of incalculable importance not only for John Donne but for all subsequent English letters.

There are epochs in human existence in which every moment is big with events; in which no idle wind that blows but contributes its share to the making or unmaking of historic destiny. Such was the case with the four decades and a half that intervened between the accession of Elizabeth and her death. Within those forty-five years the future of the English nation for three centuries and more was finally charted, and whatever of significance thereafter appeared, in the world of politics, or of economics, or of religion—or in the world of letters which has no separate existence but takes its form and spirit from these—can ultimately be explained in the light of happenings or thought currents which have their origin there. "Love," Masfield sang paradoxically, "makes many lovely customs end," but hate is an even greater innovator, and between love and hate the fabric of pre-Renaissance English life was, in the closing years of the sixteenth century, irreparably rent.

To the epoch in which he was born John Donne belonged, body and soul; the intellectual keenness, the physical energy, the limitless ambition, these he possessed in the overflowing measure of the times, which is still the admiration and despair of succeeding ages; the moral obtuseness, the pettiness of heart, the hardening of the spiritual arteries, with these, too, in the disconcerting fashion of the day, he was afflicted. He was a great man, and at the same time he was a great contradiction, and neither the man nor the contradiction can be understood without a patient investigation of the influences to which he was subjected.

First and foremost in any study of Donne must come the reali-

zation that his time was one of rapid and sweeping change. For the men of his generation the viewpoints of the past, particularly with regard to the great underlying spiritual principles upon which mediaeval life had been predicated, were being steadfastly undermined and rejected. Here during the span of two-thirds of a Biblical lifetime, two opposing interpretations of the meaningfulness of human life and endeavor, two radically incompatible theories of man's proper attitude toward the present and the future, met in the shock of an Armageddon whose shadow has never lifted from subsequent English thought. That conflict, of course, was between mediaevalism and modernism, between scholasticism and positivism, and its essence has never been better stated than by T. E. Hulme.

In order to understand a period it is necessary not so much to be acquainted with its more defined opinions as with the doctrines which are thought of not as doctrines but as Facts. . . . For the Middle Ages these "facts" were the belief in the subordination of man to certain absolute values, the radical imperfection of man, the doctrine of original sin. Everyone would assent to the assertion that these beliefs were held by the men of the Middle Ages. But that is not enough. It is necessary to realize that these beliefs were the centre of their whole civilization, and that even the character of their economic life was regulated by them—in particular by the kind of ethics which springs from the acceptance of sin as a fact. It is only lately that the importance of the relation has been recognized and a good deal of interesting work has been carried out on these lines in investigating the connection between the ideology of St. Thomas Aquinas and the economic life of his time.

Turn now to the second period. This does not seem to form a coherent period like the first. But it is possible to show, I think, that all thought since the Renaissance, in spite of its apparent variety, in reality forms one coherent whole. It all rests on the same presuppositions which were denied by the previous period. It all rests on the same conception of the nature of man, and all exhibits the same complete inability to realize the meaning of the dogma of Original Sin. In this period not only has its philosophy, its literature and its ethics been based on this new conception of man as fundamentally good, as sufficient, as the measure of things, but a good case can even be made out for regarding many of its characteristic economic features as springing entirely from this central abstract conception.¹

There was nothing new in the Renaissance insistence on the validity of man as the measure of all things; that idea was as old as Protagoras of Abdera. But coming as a challenge to the ideas accepted in the Western World for more than a thousand years, it had all the

¹ T. E. Hulme, *Speculations*. London: Kegan, Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd.; New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, Inc., 1924, pp. 50-52.

appearance of novelty. Indeed, brooding over the turmoil of sixteenth century England, a divining spirit wiser than humankind might well have recalled the import of those sibyllic lines,

Multa renascentur quae iam cecidere, cadentque
Quae nunc sunt in honore. (*Ars Poet.*, ll. 70-71.)

Between the old world and the new Donne lived his life, never quite free of the claims of the one, nor entirely satisfied with the other, but it is with the rising tide of modernism that he is finally to be identified. In her able dissertation, *Les doctrines médiévales chez Donne*, Mary Paton Ramsay has made a heroic effort to prove that Donne belongs with the ancient tradition, but her reasoning breaks down before the logic of facts. Donne wore the scholastic armor, he repeated the scholastic formulae, often scoffingly, but more often in earnest; nevertheless one feels in reading him as George Santayana felt when he looked on at a service in King's College Chapel and wondered how the Cambridge dons should have so forgotten their origins—that for him as for them, the words are strange though in his mother's tongue.

And yet from his origin it would hardly have been suspected that the youth born in 1572,² the son of a prosperous ironmonger, would one day be one of the captains in the phalanx of modernism whose charge was to beat from the field the weary mediaeval legions. It is not to be supposed, of course, that the conflict was as sharply outlined as a summary statement makes it appear. Actually the direction of the struggle had been largely determined before Donne's birth. Indicative of the almost helpless position in England of the Roman Catholic party, with which the mediaeval cause was identified, was the fact that when, three years before Donne was born, its head and rallying point, Mary, Queen of Scots, had been imprisoned under conditions which even her enemies could not justify, such was the general insufficiency of her followers that no advantageous issue could be drawn from the event. Still, even at that time the possibility existed, had the proper leadership and spirit been available, that the wreck of the mediaeval synthesis might be salvaged. The choice between mediaevalism and modernism, between scholasticism and positivism, was, for the last time, freely offered to Donne and the men of his generation, and their choice was the

² For evidence that 1572, not the traditional 1573, was the date of Donne's birth, *vide* F. P. Wilson, "Notes on the Early Life of John Donne," *Review of English Studies*, Vol. III (1927), pp. 272-279.

determining factor in the outcome of the mortal clash between the two irreconcilable ideologies.

I have said that from his origin one would not have suspected that Donne would be found in the ranks of the modernists. For he was of the blood of the staunchest defenders of the ancient tradition—the Mores, the Rastalls, and the Heywoods. Martyrdom for the cause of Rome was an old thing for that stock. The story of Thomas More himself, whose canonization by his co-religionists was confirmed before the fact by virtually every reputable historian of his period, is of course well known, but there were others in the More line who suffered no less steadfastly for the principles of their faith. Thomas More's sister, Elizabeth, married John Rastall, a printer and barrister of Lincoln's Inn who appears to have died in prison the same year as More and for the same cause. William Rastall, the son of John and Elizabeth, and once one of the Judges of the Court of Common Pleas, died in voluntary exile at Louvain in 1565. Elizabeth, the daughter of William Rastall, married John Heywood, the epigrammatist, who narrowly escaped hanging by Henry VIII, was in high favor with Mary, and after Elizabeth's accession, retired to Malines where he died. John Heywood had by his wife Elizabeth (Rastall) three children; two sons, Jasper and Ellis, both Jesuits, died in exile, while his daughter became the mother of Donne. Donne's own brother Henry was committed to Clink Prison in May, 1593 (about the time the future Dean of St. Paul's was examining "the body of Divinity as it was then controverted betwixt the Reformed and the Roman Church"), for concealing a priest, one William Harrington, and a few weeks later died of jail fever.

When Donne was born in 1572 the old religion was definitely on the defensive. Yet its position, theoretically at least, was far from hopeless. The extremely difficult task of reconstructing, across the span of almost three centuries of solidly Protestant ascendancy, the religious atmosphere of England in the early years of Elizabeth's reign may perhaps be advanced by citing Belloc's summary of the situation during the life of Milton:

The true line of cleavage running through England between the Gunpowder Plot and the expulsion of the Stuarts—a long lifetime of eighty-three years which overlaps Milton's own lifetime from three years before his birth, to fourteen years after his death—does not lie between those who were officially called Papists and the rest of the community. It does not even lie between those who might reluctantly admit themselves of Catholic

sympathy and the others: it lies between those who felt a tenderness or regret for the age-long moral habit of the country, for what had been the immemorial national Catholic religion, and those who rejected and disliked those traditions and that religion.³

In 1572 the Catholic party and its sympathizers undoubtedly outnumbered the Protestant adherents—if one may hazard a guess, as much as three, and certainly as much as two, to one.⁴ But already at that time the triumph of the innovators over their traditionalist adversaries could have been forecast. For one thing the former comprised a small, closely-knit group animated on the one hand by the driving power of political prestige, and on the other by a fanatical religious enthusiasm. Secondly, they held the key positions of power, which enabled them not only to wield the already great and rapidly growing forces of the national government in the service of their cause, but also to offer suitable and adequate inducements to young spirits of ability to align themselves with the official party. Thirdly, and most important, as is always the case when great issues of any kind are to be decided in open conflict, they had at their head, in the person of William Cecil, a directing genius of the first rank. The fact that the newly created Lord Burghley was made Lord High Treasurer and principal minister to Elizabeth in 1572, the year of Donne's birth, is not to be passed casually by in tracing the latter's hectic fortunes. It was the genius of Burghley which, when so far as England was concerned the mediaeval tradition still might hope for a reknitting of ravelled allegiances, transformed a religious and cultural conflict into a purely political one and assured the triumph of the Protestant party by identifying its cause with the rising tide of nationalism. Thus, before Donne was born, a current of events was set in motion to oppose which would have required something of the heroic temper of Thomas More, and Donne, to borrow Carlyle's biting characterization of Voltaire, had "Of all men . . . the least disposition to increase the Army of Martyrs."

Of the childhood of Donne little is known save that it began in an opulence over which, from the earliest years, the shadows of persecution hung.⁵ John Donne, the poet's father, had, on the death

³ Hilaire Belloc, *Milton*. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1935, pp. 12-13.

⁴ Belloc (*loc. cit.*) thinks the opponents were fairly evenly divided just before Milton was born but by the time of his death the Protestant superiority had reached a ratio of three to one. On the basis of that estimate the preponderance of the Catholic adherents at the beginning of the fourth quarter of the sixteenth century would be unquestionable.

⁵ For the major facts in Donne's life I have, for the most part, followed Gosse rather than the rhetorical, and not always reliable, Walton.

of Thomas Lewin, a wealthy ironmonger, in 1557, become manager of the latter's estate for the widow. The fortune of the elder Donne, who in 1574 became Warden of the Company of Ironmongers, was founded upon the rewards received from Lewin's widow for services rendered in handling this property. In passing, it is interesting to note, as proof of how Donne's material fortunes, like his cultural and lineal inheritance, derived from the traditional party, that Lewin's will prescribed that after his wife's death his property should pass to the Master, Warden, and Company of

. . . the mystery or occupation of the Ironmongers of the city of London and their successors, to hold the same until such time as a new monastery be erected at Sawtrey, in the county of Huntingdon, of the same order of monks as were then in the old monastery before its suppression, charged with the maintenance of a mass priest in the Church of St. Nicholas afore-said, to pray and preach therein, and prepare other services as set out.⁶

In 1577, when Donne was five years of age, his grandfather, John Heywood, was "included among Catholic fugitives whose lands were manipulated by a Royal Commission." In October, 1578, his Jesuit uncle, Elizaeus (Ellis) Heywood, driven from his house in Antwerp by a fanatical mob, died of shock in Louvain. Where Donne was during these tempestuous years of the late 1570's and early 1580's is unknown, although Gosse's conjecture, in opposition to Walton, that he had been sent abroad to relatives at either Malines or Louvain seems reasonable. But whether he was on the continent or in England he could not have escaped an atmosphere electric with nervous tension. In the summer of 1581 his other uncle, the unpredictable Jasper Heywood, returned to England where he eventually became superior of the English Jesuits and for several years was the center of an almost unending hubbub. The fact that the Jesuit Edward Campion and two companions were executed in December, 1581, did not deter the exuberant Father Heywood from assuming the perilous airs of a Papal Legate and otherwise distinguishing himself. However, the government authorities apparently considered Father Jasper more exasperating than dangerous, and while he spent the greater part of the year 1584 and the early part of 1585 in prison, he was treated with more than usual leniency, an offer even being made of an Anglican bishopric, it is said, if he would desert Rome. As a result of the special favour which Jasper Heywood enjoyed,

⁶ Quoted by Edmund Gosse, *The Life and Letters of John Donne*. London: William Heinemann, 1899, Vol. I, p. 10.

he was allowed to receive visits during his confinement from his sister, the mother of Donne, and Jessopp thinks it possible that on some of those occasions the mother was accompanied by the future poet.⁷

When John Donne and his brother Henry were entered at Hart Hall, Oxford, in October, 1584, Jasper Heywood, for the time being out of prison, was probably living with his sister in the parish of St. Nicholas Olave.⁸ But in January, 1585, in company with twenty other Catholics, Heywood was shipped to France under penalty of death if he ever set foot in England again. In view of Donne's near relationship to so prominent a defender of the proscribed faith, it is little wonder that when the time came for him to receive his Oxford degree, he, in Walton's words, "forbore by advice from his friends, who, being for their religion of the Romish persuasion, were conscientiously averse to some parts of the oath that is always tendered at those times, and not to be refused by those that expect the titular honour of their studies."⁹ From Oxford, according to Walton, Donne proceeded to Cambridge,¹⁰ where "he staid till his seventeenth year; all which time he was a most laborious student, often changing his studies, but endeavouring to take no degree, for the reasons formerly mentioned."¹¹

Before leaving the university period of his life, let me call attention here to one more influence which must have served to bind Donne even more closely to the mediaeval tradition and which was another of the ties that he was forced to break when he cast his lot with modernism—namely, the influence of the Spanish mystics, particularly St. Teresa and St. John of the Cross. In a later chapter on Donne's mysticism this matter has been treated in more detail, but for the sake of chronological accuracy it is well to recall here what Gosse has to say on the subject:

Mr. Fitzmaurice-Kelly, whose acquaintance with this matter is unrivalled,

⁷ Augustus Jessopp, *John Donne*, Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, and Company, 1897, pp. 10–11.

⁸ Wilson, in the article previously referred to, holds that after her marriage to John Symmings in 1576 Donne's mother would have removed to the home of her new husband in the parish of St. Bartholomew the Less. However, he admits that Symmings may not have lived in St. Bartholomew's until after 1585.

⁹ Izaak Walton, *Lives*. Boston: William Veazie. New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1865, p. 54.

¹⁰ Jessopp, of course, in *D.N.B.*, rejected Walton's Cambridge theory entirely, and Grierson inclines to Jessopp's view.

¹¹ Walton, *loc. cit.*

points out to me that for about a century from the date of Henry VIII's marriage with Katherine of Aragon, there seems to have been felt in England a curiosity about Spanish thought, which did not die away until after the Civil War, and of which Oxford was always the centre. This interest in the serious side of Spanish intelligence was greatly stimulated by Luis Vives, a reader and almost a tutor to Queen Katherine, through whose influence he was made Professor of Humanities at Oxford. In the opinion of many competent judges, Vives was a philosopher of great power. He wrote, it is true, in Latin and not in Spanish but he impressed Oxford with the sentiment and thought of Spain. When Donne was at Hart Hall, it is pretty plain that the Spanish Mystics were already known in Oxford. We find Francis Meres translating Luis de Granada, and thus, perhaps, even weaving Shakespeare into the transcendental web. I feel little doubt that Donne became acquainted at the University with Granada's *Guia de Pecadores* and other similar works, half-mystical, half-heretical, in which the Spanish genius was being developed in the manner which was to prove so irresistibly fascinating to Donne. We may note that the great Spanish mystics all died during Donne's boyhood, and while he was in close family connection with Rome—St. Teresa in 1582, Granada in 1588, St. John of the Cross in 1591.¹²

It would be worth much to the student of Donne to be certain of the details of his life between 1587 and 1591. By the spring of the latter year it now seems indisputable he had become a member of Thavies Inn preparatory to his admission in May, 1592, into Lincoln's Inn.¹³ But with the Cambridge residence extremely questionable those four years are an intriguing period. Gosse makes much of the appearance of Donne in soldier dress in the portrait engraved by William Marshall which appeared in the 1635 and 1639 editions of the poems and which bore the date 1591. For myself the bald statement of Professor Grierson opens up a fertile field for conjecture: "It is possible that before 1592 Donne himself had been sent abroad by relatives with a view to his entering a seminary or the service of a foreign power."¹⁴ The possibility of entering the service of a foreign power would account for the soldier dress if (and I am not so sure that it does) that needs to be accounted for. But what if Donne had been destined for a Roman Catholic seminary by family councils? Was he, as a matter of fact, what the Irish peasant to this day calls a "spoiled priest?" If it could be proved that he was, the explanation of his subsequent career would be much easier. In any

¹² *Op. cit.*, pp. 17-18.

¹³ *Vide* I. A. Shapiro, "John Donne and Lincoln's Inn, 1591-1594," *London Times Literary Supplement*, Oct. 23, 1930, p. 681.

¹⁴ H. J. C. Grierson, *The Poems of John Donne*. Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1912, Vol. II, p. xvi.

event, early in his London residence, Donne, as one in his position could hardly escape doing, was forced to choose in the matter of ecclesiastical allegiance. Just when he transferred his suffrage from the Roman to the Anglican Church is not certain. Walton, in a famous passage, puts his defection from Rome as early as his eighteenth year, and has him controverting Cardinal Bellarmine by the time he is twenty:

He was now entered into the eighteenth year of his age; and at that time had betrothed himself to no religion, that might give him any other denomination than a Christian. And reason and piety had both persuaded him that there could be no such sin as Schism, if an adherence to some visible Church were not necessary.

About the nineteenth year of his age, he, being then unresolved what religion to adhere to, and considering how much it concerned his soul to choose the most orthodox, did therefore—though his youth and health promised him a long life—to rectify all scruples that might concern that, presently lay aside all study of the Law, and of all other sciences that might give him a denomination; and began seriously to survey and consider the body of Divinity, as it was then controverted betwixt the Reformed and the Roman Church. And as God's blessed Spirit did then awaken him to the search, and in that industry did never forsake him—they be his own words—so he calls the same Holy Spirit to witness this protestation; that in that disquisition and search, he proceeded with humility and diffidence in himself; and by that which he took to be the safest way; namely, frequent prayers, and an indifferent affection to both parties; and indeed, Truth had too much light about her to be hid from so sharp an enquirer; and he had too much ingenuity, not to acknowledge he had found her.

Being to undertake this search, he believed the Cardinal Bellarmine to be the best defender of the Roman cause, and therefore betook himself to the examinations of his reasons. The cause was weighty, and wilful delays had been inexcusable both towards God and his own conscience: he therefore proceeded in this search with all moderate haste, and about the twentieth year of his age, did shew the then Dean of Gloucester—whose name my memory hath now lost—all the Cardinal's works marked with many weighty observations under his own hand; which works were bequeathed by him, at his death as a legacy to a most dear friend.¹⁵

Jessopp has called attention to Walton's casual chronology by indicating that Bellarmine's work was not available until the publication at Lyons, in 1593, of the three volumes of the famous *Disputationes de controversiis fidei adversus huius temporis Haereticos*.

The story of Donne's passage from Roman Catholicism to Anglicanism is a tangled one, but one fact remains clear. This scion of a

¹⁵ *Op. cit.*, pp. 55-56.

family which was closely connected by ties of blood with the most valiant defenders of the traditional faith not only passed over to the enemy but came to hate, and to hate with his whole strength, the religion of his youth. One might, in the light of his complex personality and the quasi-frantic political atmosphere of the time, pass off the *Pseudo-Martyr* and the *Conclave Ignati* as monuments of mere political time-serving, but one cannot read the three thousand pages of the sermons without becoming convinced that his venom against Roman Catholicism was real. Nor can one, with a regard for the facts, escape the conclusion that Donne followed the path indicated by worldly prudence. Consider for a moment the situation which confronted him when he became a member of Lincoln's Inn. Young, brilliant, ambitious, he must early have been introduced by Christopher Brooke, with whom he shared chambers, to the scintillating society which met on the first Friday of each month at the Mermaid in Bread street. Thus he was thrown precipitately into the company of poets, artists, scholars, and lawyers, who marched in the van of the Elizabethan splendour, who voiced the thoughts and gave tangible expression to the dreams which all England was dreaming. To Donne, ambitious in the two fields of letters and the law (two members of his family, St. Thomas More and William Rastall, had risen to eminence in the latter), it was evident that for him there could be no golden future while he remained in the Roman Catholic fold. As if to remind him sharply of the precariousness of his position, the death already alluded to of his brother in 1593 was followed in February, 1594[95] by the hanging, bowelling, and quartering of the Jesuit poet, Robert Southwell.

It is likely then, that shortly after his entry at Lincoln's Inn, Donne forsook the practice of the parental religion, probably by a gradual process. It was at this time, too, that he made his first ventures in poetry, the first three satires belonging to the year 1593, while undoubtedly about the same time his lyric endeavours were begun. But for a gentleman, writing poetry was no more than an avocation in those days, and out of the general mistiness which enshrouds Donne's early career only a few salient facts emerge. Among these are the two soldiering experiences of 1596 and 1597. The first was in the ambitious expedition to Cadiz which saw one hundred and fifty English and twenty Dutch ships, with seven thousand soldiers aboard, set out under the command of Lord Howard of Effingham, with the twenty-nine-year-old Robert, Earl of Essex,

delegated as general of the land forces. It was a brilliant assemblage that left England with the idea of striking a paralyzing blow at Spain, in her home waters, for besides Lord Howard and Essex there were among its leaders Sir Walter Raleigh, who twelve years before had planned the settlement of Virginia, Sir Francis Vere, already a veteran of the wars in the Low Countries, Sir George Carew, fresh from Ireland, and now Lieutenant-General of the Ordnance, Sir Robert Southwell, who had married a daughter of Lord Howard, and many others of England's brightest heroes. The adventure was one well-calculated to attract the most mettlesome of the younger spirits of the land and it is small wonder that Donne, weary of his nominal study of the law and doubtless eager to escape the feverish rounds of dissipation with which these years were filled,¹⁶ should have offered himself to Essex.

On the long Cadiz journey Donne must have weighed with the utmost seriousness his prospects for the future. He was now twenty-four years of age. He had already established a considerable reputation as a poet and wit, for four of the satires were in circulation as well as many of the songs and sonnets; indeed, if Ben Jonson's remark to Drummond of Hawthorndon that he had written "all his best pieces ere he was twenty-five years old" is to be taken seriously the great bulk of the work on which his reputation as a poet rests was already completed. But doubtless, too, the major share of his generous patrimony was spent, and it was essential that, if he were to continue his associations in the circles to which he was now attached, a source of income be found. It fell in pat with Donne's needs that he had for shipmates the young Thomas Egerton and Francis Wooley of Pyrford in Surrey, the son and stepson, respectively, of Sir Thomas Egerton, afterward Lord Ellesmere, who, shortly before the fleet set sail, had been made Keeper of the Great Seal and Lord High Chancellor. Francis Wooley, in particular, at a later time was in more ways than one to prove a good angel to Donne and it is almost certain that it was through him and his step-brother that Donne, only a few months after his return from the unsuccessful

¹⁶ Of the period *circa* 1596 Gosse writes: "The piety of admirers has slurred over, but has not been able to erase, the fact that at this period Donne was a type of the Renaissance young man, avid for pleasure and for knowledge and experience, which were his highest expressions of pleasure; in a high degree he must have been a law unto himself. His conscience was entirely emancipated; his religious sense was occupied exclusively with the scholastic skeleton of dogma. Above all, in his intense instinctive curiosity he had proclaimed himself cynically polygamous." *Op. cit.*, p. 67.

ful Azores expedition, was appointed secretary to the Lord Keeper.

His induction into the service of the Lord Keeper meant that whatever formal connection still linked Donne with the Roman Catholic religion had been severed. No Roman Catholic in Elizabeth's time could hold public office, and in the case of a man like Donne, whose family had been so widely known for its stubborn adherence to that faith there would have been no chance for his slipping unquestioned past the legal barriers. His renunciation of his paternal religion might have been made in either of two ways: by a formal declaration of his Anglicanism at the time of his induction, or, what is far more likely, the testimony of his conduct and manner of living during the years when he had been more or less in the public eye. The latter probability is substantiated by Walton's statement that after his eighteenth year he had "betrothed himself to no religion that might give him any other denomination than a Christian," and Gosse observes that "As soon as Donne found himself free from his mother's tutelage his attachment to the Catholic faith began to decline." Thus by 1597 at the latest Donne had broken definitely with the family religion, but while the formal severance was effected the weight and influence of that ages-old tradition were far from completely obliterated.

With his appointment as secretary to Sir Thomas, Donne entered the great world on the outskirts of which he had moved for the four or five years preceding. At York House, the Lord Keeper's home in the Strand, Donne moved among the mighty and near mighty almost on the terms of an equal. It must have seemed to him then that his fondest dreams were nearing their realization. From 1597 to 1601, the period of his residence at York House, Donne was the companion as well as the secretary of Sir Thomas, then at the height of his prestige as a lawyer and statesman. The master was noted, as Gosse declares, "for the rapid movement of his thought and for his readiness and elegance of speech," and the effect of such companionship on so susceptible a subject as Donne must have been highly exhilarating. Donne's position, far from being that of a mere scribe, approximated that of a confidant and adviser, a fact that would naturally have reacted inspiringly on a mind long conscious of great and original powers. More than that, his services may have taken him on official journeys to the Low Countries and Denmark.¹⁷

¹⁷ Cf. Gosse, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

The winds were blowing fair with no indication of an approaching tempest, and yet, from time to time, the glamour of the prospect was interrupted, just rudely enough to suggest that all was not as secure as it might seem. In 1598 the eccentric Jasper Heywood died in far away Naples. His death was only another defection in the already shattered chain which had once bound Donne to the path of the past, but one wonders what thoughts may have passed through the mind of the poet-politician when he received word of the event; what tumultuous emotions may have beat upon that keen brain as he contrasted the ease of his own position with the fugitive life and death in exile of the uncle whose insecurity and even danger he had shared fourteen years before.

During the next year occurred another event well-calculated to show upon what a troubled stage the actors in the Elizabethan political scene trod, for in October, 1599, York House became the quasi-prison of the turbulent Earl of Essex. Literary historians have long noted that the youthfulness of the English Renaissance faded swiftly and forever just as the old century came to a close. The fresh Maytime of Elizabethan song, the Maytime of *The Shepheardes Calendar*, of *Astrophel and Stella*, the *Amoretti*, the *Idea*, and a dozen other sonnet sequences, of books of airs and jaunty miscellanies, of Petruchio and Beatrice and Rosalind, changed suddenly as under a magician's wand into a golden but sombre autumn. The signs of age had to come if the blossoms were to mature into fruit. *Hamlet* is of this period, and there are those who would link its melancholia with the setting of young Essex's sun, but there was another poet, certainly bearing a more personal relation to the rebel earl's fortunes than Shakespeare, who watched the net tighten from an even nearer point of vantage:

Very odd must have been the scenes in which Donne took a keenly observant part. In particular, we may with confidence identify him with one of the spectators who, on the 8th of February, 1601, took part in the dramatic seizure of Essex in his own house when the Lord Keeper, accompanied by the Earl of Worcester, Sir William Knollys, and the Lord Chief Justice Popham, with their respective servants, were sent to invite the rebellious favourite to return to his duty. It was but a very short excursion from York House, and Essex had but just left the custody of the Lord Keeper. The gates of the house were shut upon the dignified envoys, but after some stay, as Camden tells us, they were let in by the wicket, although all their servants were kept out. It was an exciting crisis, and Donne, shut outside, would, as his master entered, see for a moment the whole courtyard full and

buzzing like a wasp's nest with malcontents, while Essex himself, half-demented, was shouting and gesticulating in the midst of his creatures. Further into the adventure, one of the most picturesque in our social history, we must not proceed, since whoever was present when the Queen's envoys were guarded with cocked muskets in Essex's inner apartments, Donne certainly was not. But to him who had waited upon Essex, and experienced in the easy life of travel the fascination of his character, all these events must have been among the most poignant which he had to encounter; and their culmination on the scaffold, when Essex was executed on the 25th of February, an epoch in the life of Donne.¹⁸

It would be unfair to the lesser poet to hold it indicative of his relative powers that the same chain of events which inspired Shakespeare to write a *Hamlet*, moved Donne to write his *The Progresse of the Soule*. Yet that strange poem marks a milestone in Donne's career. Dated by Donne himself, August 16, 1601, it unquestionably is born of the mood superinduced by the Essex debacle. It is a poor poem; the lavish praise which DeQuincey heaps upon it¹⁹ would be unintelligible were it the only time that that volatile genius allowed his exuberance to becloud his critical judgment. But it is radically revealing of the state of Donne's mind with regard to religious matters. Gosse says rightly that in tone and character it is unchristian; "it is penetrated by the mocking, sensuous scepticism of the Renaissance." Yet the framework of this poem, written by a poet who, for at least four years had been formally and publicly divorced from the Church of Rome, is animated by the peculiarly Catholic *motif* of a study of heresy. "His general purpose," Ben Jonson told Drummond of Hawthornden "was to have brought in all the bodies of the Hereticks from the soule of Cain, and at last left it in the bodie of Calvin." Jonson's recollection of what Donne had told him of the poem was obviously hazy. Not Calvin but Elizabeth, as the seventh stanza indicates, was to have been the arch-heretic. None but her could be meant by

. . . the great Soule which here amongst us now
Doth dwell, and moves that hand, and tongue, and brow,
Which, as the Moone the sea, moves us.

The fact is, as Grierson says, that Donne, "who was still a Catholic

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

¹⁹ "Massy diamonds compose the very substance of his poem on the Metempsychosis, thoughts and descriptions which have the gloomy sublimity of Ezekiel or Aeschylus, whilst a diamond dust of rhetorical brilliancies is strewed over the whole of his occasional verses and his prose." *The Collected Writings of Thomas DeQuincey*. Edited by David Masson. Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1889-90, Vol. X, p. 101.

in the sympathies that come of education and association, seems to have contemplated a satirical history of the great heretic in lineal descent from the wife of Cain to Elizabeth. . . ."²⁰ I call attention to the anomalous frame of mind here indicated because evidences of it will recur again and again in Donne's letters and poems, and because only a right understanding and interpretation of it will explain Donne's conception of and attitude toward the mediaeval world. He spoke its language, he used its terms, he invoked its authority, but he did all this in a spirit not only alien to, but positively inimical to, that world.

Four months after the composition of *The Progresse of the Soule*, in early December, 1601, Donne was married secretly to Anne More, daughter of Sir George More of Loseley, and niece of the second Lady Egerton, who had died in January, 1600. After the death of Lady Egerton, the sixteen-year-old Anne had stayed on at York House as the head of the Lord Keeper's establishment. Donne's secret marriage to the young lady, who stood in the relation of ward to his employer, of course ended his political career. It was not that Donne was an ineligible suitor for the hand of Anne More, although Sir George's ambitions for the future of his house undoubtedly would have caused him to reject the poet's pretensions had they been openly advanced. The plain facts of the case were that a man who could break faith in such a matter could not be trusted in affairs as important as those transacted by the Lord Keeper's secretary. Even so, Sir Thomas Egerton might have passed the troublesome episode by, but the bride's father, stung by the affront to his dignity, virtually forced the dismissal of his son-in-law.

Donne's situation now was indeed perilous. His inheritance wasted, his political career, which had opened with such promise, at an end as a result of his own indiscretion, the brilliant prospects of four years before had turned to ashes at his touch. One notes the hysterical ring in his letter to his irate father-in-law on February 13, 1601[2], after his release from Fleet Prison (his marriage had involved a breaking of both civil and canon law) but while still in technical custody in his chambers in the Strand. One notes, too, something more than a little cringing in his disclaimer in the same letter of "that fault which was laid to me of having deceived some gentlewomen before, and that of loving a corrupt religion. . . ."²¹

²⁰ *Op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 219.

²¹ Gosse, *op. cit.*, p. 106.

In a letter to Sir Thomas Egerton, written the same day, even the high-flown language of Elizabethan convention seems oozing with unnecessary unction.

Only in that coin, wherein they that delight to do benefits and good turns for the work's sake love to be paid, am I rich, which is thankfulness, which I humbly and abundantly present to your Lordship, beseeching you to give such way and entertainment to this virtue of mercy, which is always in you, and always awake, that it may so soften you, that as it hath wrought for me the best of blessings, which is this way to health, so it may give my mind her chief comfort, which is your pardon for my bold and presumptuous offence.

Almighty God be always so with you in this world, as you may be sure to be with him in the next. 13th Feb. 1601[2].

Your Lordship's poor and repentant servant,

J. DONNE.²²

Disaster was averted by the kindness of Sir Francis Wooley. Through the death of his father, Sir John Wooley, private secretary to the Queen herself, Sir Francis had inherited the estate of Pyrford in Surrey, and now that his friend was in trouble he offered the hospitality of this estate. From early in 1602 until 1604 Donne and his wife must have lived at Pyrford, but of this period no details are available.

In 1605 Donne went up to London to begin the fashioning of a new career. The stage for that career had been set by the activities in 1605 of James I, who, irritated by the failure of the Hampton Court conference and stung doubtless by charges of favouritism toward Roman Catholics, began a campaign designed to bring the Recusants into line. One feature of that campaign was the resumption of the collection of the fine of £20 per lunar month from all Recusants, through which Catholics, in particular, suffered. The result was an inevitable outburst of theological pamphleteering in which the Rev. Thomas Morton, an intimate of the Earls of Huntington, was the spokesman for the royal position. The connection between Donne and Morton is easily established when it is recalled that, next to Lady Bedford, the warmest of Donne's friends among the great ladies of Elizabethan society was the wife of the fifth Earl of Huntington. Moreover, Donne's friendship with the countess was then already several years old, dating, doubtless, from the marriage of her mother in October, 1600, to Sir Thomas Egerton.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 107-108.

Thus, according to Gosse, Donne was engaged from 1605 to the summer of 1607 "in revising, collecting, and even perhaps composing for Morton" in that worthy's pamphlet barrage directed particularly against Roman Catholics. At this juncture Donne's mental state must have been perturbed in the extreme. It was one thing for a descendant of the Mores and the Heywoods to cut loose the anchor of a faith which held in check the bulging sails of his political ambitions, although such an action might still leave its author in a position of comparative neutrality. But to turn the power of his subtle intellect against the religion for which through generations, back to Henry's chancellor himself, his family had bled, was to align himself irrevocably with what, from his infancy, he had been taught to consider an alien cause. And in fact, in an undated letter to Sir Henry Goodyer which Gosse attributed to the summer of 1607, Donne does, for the first time, in words which we possess, set himself apart from Roman Catholics:

... for though writing be not of the precepts of friendship, but of the counsels, yet, as in some cases to some men counsels become precepts, and though not immediately from God, yet very roundly and quickly from His Church (as selling and dividing goods in the first time, continence in the Roman Church, and order and decency in ours), so to me who can do nothing else, it seems to bind my conscience to write; . . . ²³

Still, when in that same summer Morton, now elevated to the Deanery of Gloucester, sought to gain him for the Anglican ministry and weighted his request with the proffer of a handsome benefice, Donne refused. The proper introduction to this episode is through Walton's account which he had received from Morton himself, then the aged bishop of Durham. Morton had requested that Donne withhold his reply until the third day, at which time he returned to speak thus:

My most worthy and most dear friend, since I saw you, I have been faithful to my promise, and have also meditated much of your great kindness, which hath been such as would exceed even my own gratitude; but that it cannot do; and more I cannot return to you; and I do that with an heart full of humility and thanks, though I may not accept of your offer; but Sir, my refusal is not for that I think myself too good for that calling, for which Kings, if they think so, are not good enough: nor for that my education and learning, though not eminent, may not, being assisted with God's grace and humility, render me in some measure fit for it: but I dare make so dear a friend as you are, my confessor: some irregularities of my life have

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 170-171.

been so visible to some men, that though I have, I thank God, made my peace with him by penitential resolutions against them, and by the assistance of his grace banished them my affections; yet this, which God knows to be so, is not so visible to man, as to free me from their censures, and it may be that sacred calling from a dishonour. And besides, whereas it is determined by the best of casuists that God's glory should be the first end, and a maintenance the second motive to embrace that calling; and though each man may propose to himself both together, yet the first may not be put last without a violation of conscience, which he that searches the heart will judge. And truly my present condition is such, that if I ask my conscience, whether it be reconcileable to that rule, it is at this time so perplexed about it that I can neither give myself nor you an answer.²⁴

Gosse thought that this paragraph in Walton was Morton's précis of the sentiments which Donne had expressed to him, with this modification—that Morton, looking back over the career of the Dean of St. Paul's, then dead for more than a quarter of a century, "innocently and naturally modified the real objections made by the poet to his proposition." To Gosse it seemed reasonable that it was not a moral scruple that withheld Donne from the Anglican pulpit at that time. Neither the seventeenth century in general, nor John Donne in particular, was wont to exhibit such a refinement of the moral sense. The real stumbling block Gosse believed was a doctrinal one.

All this time, we must reflect, Donne, although he had long since abandoned the ceremonial of the Roman Church, had not ceased to be a Roman Catholic so far as to enter any other communion. He had preserved, as the *Pseudo-Martyr* shows us, a lively curiosity in Catholic dogma, and it was his late peculiar position, as a Roman Catholic, without fervour and yet with great erudition, which had commended him to Morton. My own impression is that Donne was actually detached at this time from either church, although I am not unaware that such detachment, common enough in France and Italy, was very rare in England.²⁵

Mrs. Simpson, who discounts Gosse's monumental study with the provocative statement that she "found Walton a safer guide as an interpreter of Donne's character and motives" refuses to accept Sir Edmund's qualification of Donne's motive.

Mr. Gosse thinks Donne's refusal of Morton's offer so extraordinary that it can only be explained by a lingering attachment to the Roman Church. Against such a suggestion must be set the fact that the work in which Donne had earned Morton's approval was that of controversy with the Romanists, and that in a short time he was to publish two vigorous attacks on Roman policy—*Pseudo-Martyr* and *Ignatius his Conclave*. Many pas-

²⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 65.

²⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. 161.

sages in Donne's later works show his high estimate of the duties and privileges of the ministry and his consciousness of the unworthiness of his early life, and there is surely no need to seek for any further reason than that given by Donne himself, coupled with his lingering hope of promotion in some secular sphere of affairs.²⁶

To Mrs. Simpson's argument it must be objected, first, that long after 1607, in both letters and poems, Donne did give evidence of a "lingering attachment to the Roman Church," and, secondly, that while, as I have already pointed out, the plying of his pen against the political and disciplinary position of Rome marked a considerable advance beyond the mere apathy of his earlier years, it was in no wise so irrecoverable an action as the acceptance of ordination in another church would have been.

Nevertheless, almost by way of postscript, Mrs. Simpson has focussed attention on another factor which undoubtedly contributed to the deterring of Donne from the Anglican ministry in 1607. That "lingering hope of promotion in some secular sphere of affairs" is a motive which cannot be overlooked in weighing causes and consequences in this extraordinary man's life. Nor was Donne singular in that respect. One needs only to recall that a man far more eminent for piety than himself, Donne's young friend and satellite, George Herbert, lived the life of an ambitious and place-serving courtier for all except the last three years of his brief life, to realize what a magnetic attraction the great world of London and the court had for those who were socially and politically ambitious. And in the light of this ambition, Donne, at this agitated moment must have seen how futile were the hopes of anyone connected even nominally with Roman Catholicism. For in 1605 occurred that strange travesty, the Gunpowder Plot, which threw the whole nation into an anti-papist fever, as one result of which a new penal code was invoked in 1606. By its provisions not only were Roman Catholics made incapable of practicing in surgery, physic, and canon or civil law, but they were forbidden to appear at court or within ten miles of London. In addition, unless a child born of Catholic parents were baptized within a month by an Anglican minister a fine of £100 was exacted. It is worthy of mention that Donne's future intimate, Lord Hay, whose Catholic leanings would seem to be definitely indicated by the fact that Donne bequeathed him the picture of the Blessed Virgin which

²⁶ Evelyn M. Simpson, *A Study of the Prose Works of John Donne*. Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1924, pp. 24-25.

hung in his private dining room during his incumbency of the deanery of St. Paul's, was one of those to profit handsomely from the King's assigning Catholic Recusants to his protective custody. The Catholics, to prevent their land from being seized, would naturally deem it advisable to compound with the grantee. So tangled and so contradictory were the political and religious skeins of the day.

Having established his family at Mitcham, Donne alternated between there and chambers in London from 1606 to the autumn of 1608. These years present a picture of the steady deterioration of Donne's fortunes. The straits to which poverty and sickness had brought him are indicated in two letters which he addressed to Sir Henry Goodyer. In the first, dated August 10, 1608, he wrote:

And the reason why I did not send an answer to your last week's letter was because it then found me under too great a sadness and at present it is thus with me. There is no one person but myself well of my family; I have already lost half a child, and with that mischance of hers, my wife is fallen into such a discomposure as would afflict her too extremely, but that the sickness of all her other children stupefies her; of one of which, in good faith, I have not much hope; and these meet with a fortune so ill provided for physic and such relief, that if God should ease us with burials, I know not how to perform even that; but I flatter myself with this hope that I am dying too; for I cannot waste faster than by such griefs. As for—

From my Hospital at Mitcham,

JOHN DONNE²⁷

The second, dated September 7 by Walton, shows Donne weighing the possibility of suicide, yet still ambitious for a place in the sun.

Two of the most precious things which God hath afforded us here for the agony and exercise of our sense and spirit, which are a thirst and inhiation after the next life, and a frequency of prayer and meditation in this, are often envenomed and putrified, and stray into a corrupt disease; for as God doth thus occasion, and positively concur to evil, that when a man is purposed to do a great sin, God infuses some thoughts which make him choose a less sin, or leave out some circumstance which aggravated that; so the devil doth not only suffer but provoke us to some things naturally good, upon condition that we shall omit some other more necessary and more obligatory. And this is his greatest subtlety, because herein we have the deceitful comfort of having done well, and can very hardly spy our error because it is but an insensible omission and no accusing act. With the first of these I have often suspected myself to be overtaken, which is with a desire of the next life; which though I know it is not merely out of a weariness of this, because I had the same desires when I went with the tide, and enjoyed

²⁷ Gosse, *op. cit.*, p. 189.

fairer hopes than now; yet I doubt worldly encumbrances have increased it. I would not that death should take me asleep. I would not have him merely seize me, and only declare me to be dead, but win me and overcome me.

When I must shipwreck, I would do it in a sea where mine impotency might have some excuse; not in a sullen weedy lake, where I could not have so much as exercise for my swimming. Therefore I would fain do something but that I cannot tell what is no wonder. For to choose is to do; but to be no part of any body is to be nothing. At most, the greatest persons are but great wens and excrescences; men of wit and delightful conversation but as moles for ornament, except they be so incorporated into the body of the world that they contribute something to the sustentation of the whole.

This I made account that I begun early, when I understood the study of our laws; but was diverted by the worst voluptuousness, which is an hydropic, immoderate desire of human learning and languages—beautiful ornaments to great fortunes; but mine needed an occupation, and a course which I thought I entered well into when I submitted myself to such a service, as I thought might [have] employed those poor advantages which I had.

And there I stumbled too, yet I would try again; . . . ²⁸

That this last letter was written about the time the *Biathanatos* was being composed throws some light on that strange volume and renders Jessopp's apologetic lines more than unconvincing. Jessopp argued that the idea of Donne's ever deliberately entertaining the temptation of suicide "must always appear incredible to any who have learned to know the man, and to appreciate the true nobility of his character." He declared that Donne undertook to discuss whether suicide under any conceivable circumstances might be considered as less than an unpardonable sin merely as an exercise in casuistry, and insisted that Donne was chiefly fascinated by the novelty of the subject: "He attacked it from the point of view of an idealist, and an idealist only."²⁹ Gosse, rejecting Jessopp's apology, is somewhat more illuminating:

It seems quite certain that he preserved, at all events in early middle life, a very faint hold upon vitality, and that he suffered, in his moments of depression, from an intense desire to free himself from the burden of it by poison, pistol or flood. He knew that the wish was a morbid one, but he was conscious of its strength, and the fear was always present with him that he might some day succumb to it. But he was a man of unquestioning faith and of intense religious convictions. The ideas of mental disease, of neurosis, of irresistible and irresponsible impulse, which prevail today, and are so great a comfort to the weak, had not been propounded in Donne's day, although it is plain that some of them had faintly suggested themselves to him. It was, therefore, of extreme importance to Donne to persuade himself, with

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 190–191.

²⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. 62.

all the casuistry of which his ingenious brain was capable, that if he did some day yield to his weakness, and in a moment of despair throw off the intolerable load of life, he would yet have not committed a mortal sin. If this is not the purpose and the aim of *Biathanatos*, then it appears to me the idlest trifling with the dry bones of disputation that was ever committed. I am willing to believe that Donne was sick in soul, but not that he was a fantastic trifler, and I regard this curious little book as one of the most poignant relics of his intellectual career.³⁰

From this nadir of his fortunes Donne was lifted once more through the agency of Sir Francis Wooley in the autumn of 1608. Before the Donnes left Pyrford, Sir Francis had succeeded in reconciling them with Mrs. Donne's father, and now he came forward to insist that Sir George pay his daughter's dowry. According to Walton the amount of the dowry fixed upon was £800, or interest of £20 quarterly until the principal was paid. Reckoning as Gosse does that money was ten times as valuable at the beginning of the reign of James I as it is today (the present instability of currencies would again offset the reckoning), Donne suddenly found himself in possession of a fortune equivalent to £800 annually in our time, as a result of which his worst misfortunes "vanished like a cloud." It was at this time that Donne established his friendship with Lucy, Countess of Bedford, the greatest and most liberal of his feminine patrons, and while his political ambitions were still to suffer such a frustration as the failure to gain the secretaryship of the Virginia colony in the early winter of 1609, nevertheless his fortunes had begun what was now to be a steady ascent.

Along the avenue of preferment which he was eventually to follow, the *Pseudo-Martyr* is another important landmark. Walton says it was written at the command of James himself.

About this time there grew many disputes, that concerned the Oath of Supremacy and Allegiance, in which the King had appeared, and engaged himself by his public writings now extant: and his Majesty discoursing with Mr. Donne, concerning many of the reasons which are usually urged against the taking of those Oaths, apprehended such a validity and clearness in his stating the questions, and his answers to them, that his Majesty commanded him to bestow some time in drawing the arguments into a method and then to write his answers to them; and, having done that not to send, but be his own messenger, and bring them to him. To this he presently and diligently applied himself, and within six weeks brought them to him under his own hand writing, as they be now printed; the book bearing the name of *Pseudo-Martyr*, printed anno 1610.³¹

³⁰ *Op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 262-263.

³¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 75.

Gosse questions the king's positive command in the matter and also the period of six weeks for its composition, but holds what is obvious, that the book was inspired by Donne's "ambition . . . to elevate himself and to stand before the king."

Again, the state of Donne's mind as he wrote the *Pseudo-Martyr* offers a tempting subject to the literary analyst. In "An Advertisement to the Reader" he calls attention to the fact, which could scarcely be unknown to the readers who would wrestle with such a book, that he himself was of the blood of martyrs.

. . . I have beene euer kept awake in a meditation of Martyrdome by being deriued from such a stocke and race, as I beleue, no family, (which is not of farre larger extent, and greater branches,) hath endured and suffered more in their persons and fortunes, for obeying the Teachers of Romane Doctrine, then it hath done.³²

A little later, too, follows a spiritual *apologia* in which Donne attempts to defend his ecclesiastical peregrinations from such of his peers as may be inclined to judge him.

They who haue descended so lowe, as to take knowledge of me, and to admit me into their consideration, know well that I used no inordinate hast, nor precipitation in binding my conscience to any locale religion. I had a longer worke to doe then many other men; for I was first to blot out certaine impressions of the Romane religion, and to wrastle both against the examples and against the reasons, by which some hold was taken; and some anticipations early layde upon my conscience, both by Persons who by nature had a power and superiority over my will, and others who by their learning and good life, seemd to me justly to claim an interest for the guiding, and rectifying of mine understanding in these matters. And although I apprehended well enough, that this irresolution not onely retarded my fortune, but also bred some scandale, and endangered my spiritual reputation by laying me open to many misinterpretations; yet all these respects did not transport me to any violent and sudden determination, till I had, to the measure of my poore wit and judgment, surveyed and digested the whole body of Divinity controverted between ours and the Romane Church. In which search and disquisition, that God, which awakened me then, and hath never forsaken me in that industry, as He is the author of that purpose, so is He a witnes of this protestation; that I behaved my selfe, and proceeded therein with humility, and diffidence in my selfe; and by that, which by His grace, I tooke to be the ordinary meanes, which is frequent praier, and equal and indifferent affections.³³

The reader may be pardoned, I think, if he detects a smugness in this defense, which would seem to devolve into an unconscious ad-

³² *Pseudo-Martyr*. London: Printed by W. Stansby for Walter Burre, 1610.

³³ *Ibid.*, Preface, pp. 4-5.

mission of the vulnerability of the author's motives. Like Hamlet's mother, Donne here doth protest too much. Particularly does this political harrying of the Romanists take on less and less the color of the genuine crusader's zeal and lay itself open to the suspicion of a more mundane motivation, when it is placed side by side with this extract from a letter written by Donne to Sir Henry Goodyer, also in 1609:

You know I never fettered nor imprisoned the word Religion, nor straightening it friarly, *ad Religiones factitias* (as the Romans call well their orders of Religion), nor immuring it in a Rome, or a Wittenberg, or a Geneva; they are all virtual beams of one Sun, and wheresoever they find clay hearts, they harden them and moulder them into dust; and they entender and mollify waxen. They are not so contrary as the North and South Poles, and that [?] they are co-natural pieces of one circle.³⁴

Here it is clear, Rome is still, to Donne, of the fellowship of Christianity. She was not then, nor, did she ever become to him the Scarlet Woman, the Babylonian Woe. One would feel more confidence in the integrity of his religious progress if she had.

One other source of evidence must be adduced here to throw light on the true state of Donne's religious convictions at the time when he was in the van of the attacks on the political abilities of the Roman Catholics, namely, such poems as *The Litanie* and *The Crosse*. On the former, in an undated letter to Sir Henry Goodyer which Grierson attributes to 1609 or 1610³⁵ and which, consequently, was written either in the same year or the year succeeding the composition of the *Pseudo-Martyr*, Donne comments:

Since my imprisonment in my bed, I have made a meditation in verse, which I call a Litany; the word you know imports no other then supplication, but all Churches have one forme of supplication by that name. . . . That by which it will deserve best acceptance is, that neither the Roman Church need call it defective, because it abhors not the particular mention of the blessed Triumphers in heaven, nor the Reformed can discreetly accuse it of attributing more than a rectified devotion ought to doe.³⁶

Only a few stanzas from *The Litanie* will suffice to show how far the native Catholic note in Donne was from being completely "rectified" at this time.

V

The Virgin Mary

For that faire blessed Mother-maid,
Whose flesh redeem'd us; That she-Cherubim,

³⁴ Gosse, *op. cit.*, p. 226.

³⁵ *Op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 239.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 196-197.

Which unlock'd Paradise, and made
 One claime for innocence and disseiz'd sinne,
 Whose wombe was a strange heav'n, for there
 God cloath'd himselfe, and grew,
 Our zealous thanks wee poure. As her deeds were
 Our helpes, so are her prayers; nor can she sue
 In vaine, who hath such titles unto you.

XI

The Confessors

Therefore with thee triumpheth there
 A Virgin Squadron of white Confessors,
 Whose bloods betroth'd, not marryed were,
 Tender'd, not taken by those Ravishers:
 They know, and pray, that we may know,
 In every Christian
 Hourly tempestuous persecutions grow:
 Tentations martyr us alive: A man
 Is to himselfe a Diocletian.

XII

The Virgins

The cold white snowie Nunnery,
 Which, as thy mother, their Abbesse, sent
 Their bodies backe againe to thee,
 As thou hadst lent them, cleane and innocent,
 Though they have not obtain'd of thee,
 That or Thy Church, or I,
 Should keep, as they, our first integrity;
 Divorce thou sinne in us, or bid it die,
 And call chaste widowhead Virginitie.³⁷

Although one might cite the *La Corona* sonnets (which Grierson attributes also to the Mitcham period), particularly those on the Annunciation and Nativité, as abounding in Catholic thought and imagery, it is still possible that the mood and sentiment of these poems could have been appreciated and endorsed by the more conservative Anglicans of Donne's time. Such, however, is not the case with *The Crosse*. Gosse is quite right in saying that in the couplet

From mee, no Pulpit nor misgrounded law,
 Nor scandall taken, shall this Crosse withdraw,

he writes "precisely as any fervent Italian or Spanish monk might do." Moreover, the entire poem abounds in lines which breathe the intransigence of the most ardent Catholic Recusant—

³⁷ The text of this and subsequent quotations from Donne's poetry is that of H. J. C. Grierson's *The Poems of John Donne*. Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1912.

Since Christ embrac'd the Crosse it selfe, dare I
 His image, the image of his Crosse deny?
 Would I have profit by the sacrifice,
 And dare the chosen Altar to despise?
 It bore all other sinnes, but is it fit
 That it should beare the sinne of scorning it?

.
 Who can blot out the Crosse, which th' instrument
 Of God dew'd on mee in the Sacrament?
 Who can deny mee power, and liberty
 To stretch mine armes, and mine owne Crosse to be?
 Swimme, and at every stroake, thou art thy Crosse;
 The Mast and yard make one, where seas do tosse;
 Looke downe, thou spiest out Crosses in small things;
 Looke up, thou seest birds rais'd on crossed wings;

.
 For when that Crosse ungrudg'd unto you stickes,
 Then are you to yourselfe a Crucifixe.

The second anti-Romanist controversial work of this period, *Ignatius his Conclave*, does not, I believe, contribute anything to an understanding of Donne's spiritual history. Dated 1610 by Keynes, it belongs to that ocean of violent and rancorous controversial literature with which the 17th century is filled, and of which Milton's pugnacious pamphlets are the most famous examples. It can be said of Donne that even in his rages he is never quite so little the gentleman (in the modern sense) as was Milton under similar circumstances. The work is an attack on the Jesuits, especially on their founder, Ignatius Loyola (who had been beatified in Rome by Pope Paul V in 1609), in which Ignatius is pictured as the favorite and chief councillor of Lucifer, whom, indeed, he is made to overshadow. The piece is written with a great deal of dash, but the spirit is that of political rather than of doctrinal controversy.

This controversial period in Donne's life was followed by the lucky incident which saw his original funeral elegy for the death of Elizabeth Drury bring forth in its wake, under the lavish patronage of Sir Robert Drury, the *Anatomie of the World*, and *The Second Anniversarie*. Gosse can hardly be gainsaid when he declares:

We can but regard this elaborate and repeated celebration of Elizabeth Drury as an eccentric and, on the whole, unfortunate episode in Donne's career as a poet. It is plain that he undertook and conducted it as a perfectly straightforward piece of business; he saw no reason why he should not expend his art on the eulogy of a young lady whom he had never seen, but

whose father was generously expending upon him all the evidences of a princely hospitality. In return for house and home, for comforts to Donne's wife and food to his children, Sir Robert Drury asked a small expenditure of extravagantly laudatory verse, and Donne, no doubt, saw no shame in supplying what was asked for.³⁸

Gosse also notes that during the time of his residence at Drury House and his sojourn in France and the Low Countries with Sir Robert, Donne had apparently abandoned all interest in theology: "Nowhere is he so little of a divine as in these years immediately preceding his sudden resolution to enter the Church."³⁹

On his return to England in the autumn of 1612 Donne was again brought face to face with the problem of his future. Thanks to the dowry payments from Sir George More and the hospitality of Sir Robert Drury, his financial situation was easy, but it rested on precarious supports; consequently, it behooved the father of seven children to look about him. In a letter directed to Lord Rochester under cover to Donne's own friend, Lord Hay, Donne in October, 1612, suddenly announced his readiness to adopt the clerical profession.

My Lord,—I may justly fear that your Lordship hath never heard of the name which lies at the bottom of this letter; nor could I come to the boldness of presenting it now, without another boldness, of putting his Lordship, who now delivers it, to that office. Yet I have (or flatter myself to have) just excuses of this, and just ground of that ambition. For, having obeyed at last, after much debatement within me, the inspirations (as I hope) of the Spirit of God, and resolved to make my profession Divinity; I make account, that I do but tell your Lordship, what God told me, which is, that it is in this course, if in any, that my service may be of use to this Church and State.⁴⁰

What had happened to cause Donne, who five years before had rejected Dean Morton's proposal, now to volunteer to take orders? Was it due as he himself says in this letter to "the inspirations . . . of the Spirit of God," or to more mundane reasons? The following letter to Sir Robert Ker, written somewhat later, supplies something of an answer:

Sir,—I sought you yesterday with a purpose of accomplishing my health by the honour of kissing your hands. But I find by my going abroad, that as the first Christians were forced to admit some Jewish ceremonies, only to bury the synagogue with honour, so my fever will have so much reverence and respect as that I must keep sometimes at home. I must therefore be bold to put you to the pain of considering me.

³⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. 278.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 305.

⁴⁰ Gosse, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 20.

If therefore my Lord upon your delivery of my last letter said nothing to you of the purpose thereof, let me tell you now that it was, that in obedience of his commandment, to acquaint him with anything which might advantage me, I was bold to present that which I heard, which was that Sir D. Carleton was likely to be removed from Venice to the States; of which if my Lord said nothing to you, I beseech you add thus much to your many other favours, to entreat my Lord at his best commodity to afford me the favour of speaking with him.

But if he have already opened himself so far to you as that you may take knowledge thereof to him, then you may ease him of that trouble of giving me an audience, by troubling yourself thus much more, as to tell him in my behalf, and from me, that though Sir. D. Carleton be not removed, yet that place with the States lying open, there is a fair field of exercising his favour towards me, and of constituting a fortune to me, and (that which is more) of a means for me to do him particular services.⁴¹

Mrs. Simpson, following Jessopp, has absolved Donne from guilty complicity in the Countess of Essex divorce proceedings, and it is now evident that Gosse was wrong in attributing to the poet an active part in the legal proceedings which led up to that divorce, but Donne's letters to Rochester (better Somerset) betray a servile and fawning attitude which was conspicuously void of dignity, even after due allowances have been made for the difference in their positions and for the manners of the time. Whether or not Rochester dissuaded Donne from the ministry in 1612 by holding out the phantom of secular preferment, the latter's final determination to enter the ministry was reached almost simultaneously with the beginning of the decline of Rochester's fortunes. He was ordained early in 1615⁴² by his old friend, Bishop John King, who formerly had been chaplain to Sir Thomas Egerton.

The long and slow dissolution of the ties which bound him to Roman Catholicism being now completed—the process, as I have traced it, including first, indifference in practice, then public acknowledgment of conformity to Anglicanism, and finally acceptance, after long and repeated delays, of Anglican ordination—the attitude of Donne's mind toward that religion is interestingly revealed in a letter to Sir Henry Goodyer, apparently of April, 1615. The relevant lines follow:

I will not, nor need you, compare the religions. The channels of God's mercies run through both fields; and they are sister teats of His graces, yet

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 39-40.

⁴² *Vide* "To the Honorable Kt. Sir Edward Herbert," *Complete Poetry and Selected Prose*. Edited by John Hayward. Bloomsbury: The Nonesuch Press, 1929, pp. 465-466.

both diseased and infected, but not both alike. And I think that as Copernicism in the mathematics hath carried earth farther up, from the stupid centre; and yet not honoured it, nor advantaged it because for the necessity of appearances, it hath carried heaven so much higher from it; so the Roman profession seems to exhale, and refine our wills from earthly drugs and lees more than the Reformed, and so seems to bring us nearer Heaven; but then that carries heaven farther from us, by making us pass so many courts, and offices of saints in this life, in all our petitions, and lying in a painful prison in the next, during the pleasure, not of Him to whom we go, and who must be our Judge, but of them from whom we come, who know not our case.⁴³

Allowing for the faulty presentation of Catholic dogma which almost twenty years of separation would charitably explain, Donne again, as in passages previously cited, cannot bring himself to divorce the Roman Church from the fellowship of Christianity. His implied defense of Anglicanism, that it had neither removed heaven so far from man, nor man so far from heaven, is already a defense of the *Via Media*. It represents a secession from the traditional faith inspired not by the fiery insistence that Rome had been false to her trust, but simply by the wishful feeling that perhaps a less intransigent faith would serve. I call attention to this fact here as another step in the procedure whereby the Renaissance humanist in Donne overcame the mediaevalist, never completely and satisfactorily, but in such an imperfect fashion as to leave his mind fatally divided against itself; that division of his artistic allegiance between two worlds, one not dead but receding, and the other born, but, still inadequately shaped, is the key to a right understanding of the poetry of Donne.

Whether or not, as Walton says, King James himself took a personal interest in winning Donne for the Anglican Church, Donne was not slow in mounting the ladder of clerical promotion. Already on April 30, 1615, he preached before Queen Anne at Greenwich, and, if, indeed, he was not ordained a royal chaplain, it was not much later that he preached his first sermon before the King in Whitehall. But even earlier, on April 7, 1615, the University of Cambridge, against the will of the Vice-Chancellor and other officials, had been forced, through James' insistence, to grant Donne the degree of Doctor of Divinity.

That Donne's entrance into orders had been timely was made apparent when, on April 2, 1615, Sir Robert Drury died. It had been the lavish hospitality of Sir Robert, together with the dower payments of Sir George More, which had held in abeyance all danger of

⁴³ Gosse, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 78-79.

financial complications during the five preceding years. However, by the spring of 1616 Donne had been given the living at Keyston, a small village in Huntingdonshire, and in July of the same year, the richly endowed Crown benefice of Sevenoaks in Kent was added.

The steady advance of Donne along the road of ecclesiastical preferment was darkened by the death of his faithful wife on August 15, 1617. Walton has romanced prettily but inaccurately over the effect on Donne of this event.

His first motion from his house, was to preach where his beloved wife lay buried,—in St. Clement's Church, near Temple Bar, London,—and his text was a part of the Prophet Jeremy's Lamentation: "Lo, I am the Man that have seen affliction."

And indeed his very words and looks testified him to be truly such a man; and they, with the addition of his sighs and tears, expressed in his Sermon, did so work upon the affections of his hearers, as melted and moulded them into a companionable sadness; . . .⁴⁴

Gosse is certainly right in insisting that this picture is overdrawn: "... an examination of the sermon itself reveals no such emotional or historical appeals to sympathy as the sentimental genius of Walton conceived." But, unquestionably, the funereal note which is so indissolubly connected with Donne's pulpit efforts was deepened, though by no means entirely inspired, by the death of his wife.

Clouded though it was by personal sorrow, the star of Donne was now definitely rising. In October, 1616, came his appointment as Reader in Divinity to the Benchers of Lincoln's Inn, which fellowship he had entered as a layman a quarter of a century before. It was here in the lengthy and learned discourses which he delivered to a highly critical audience that Donne consolidated and confirmed his rapidly growing reputation as a preacher. The years from 1617 to 1621 were years of intense activity. The lectureship at Lincoln's Inn would naturally take up most of his time, involving, as Jessopp estimates, fifty sermons a year. In addition, early in 1617, not many months after his installation at Lincoln's Inn, Donne appeared as a preacher at Paul's Cross before an audience including Archbishop Abbot, Sir Francis Bacon, Sir Julius Caesar, Lord Hay, and others, which of itself is sufficient testimony to the rapid growth of his pulpit reputation. But early in these years too, the Muse, long dormant, once more became active, for it is at this time that the nineteen *Holy Sonnets* were composed.

⁴⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 83.

As one reads these sonnets he encounters still more evidence of the division in Donne's mind, as, now irrevocably committed to Anglicanism, and already if not its greatest, certainly its most promising preacher, he pondered within himself the problem of ecclesiastical allegiance. Each of the last three sonnets of the series, first published by Gosse in *The Life and Letters*, is illuminating, but particularly so is the eighteenth:

Show me deare Christ, thy spouse, so bright and clear.
 What! is it She, which on the other shore
 Goes richly painted? or which rob'd and tore
 Laments and mournes in Germany and here?
 Sleepes she a thousand, then peepes up one yeare?
 Is she selfe truth and errs? now new, now outwore?
 Doth she, and did she, and shall she evermore
 On one, on seaven, or on no hill appeare?
 Dwells she with us, or like adventuring knights
 First travaile we to seeke and then make Love?
 Betray kind husband thy spouse to our sights,
 And let myne amorous soule court thy mild Dove,
 Who is most trew, and pleasing to thee, then
 When she is embrac'd and open to most men.

These sonnets were suppressed by the editors of 1633 and 1635, says Gosse,

... because of the leaning which they betrayed to certain Romish doctrines. In this they offer to us a remarkable contribution to our knowledge of the inner mind of Donne. They seem to prove that even after the death of his wife, and his subsequent conversion, he hankered after some tenets of the Roman faith, or at least that he still doubted as to his attitude with regard to them.⁴⁵

In this connection it is worth noting, too, that in conformity with general Anglican practice of the time it was not the King James Bible which Donne used for his citations but the Douai edition of the Vulgate, printed in six volumes in 1617 with the commentary of the mediaeval father, Nicholas de Lyra, and the gloss of Walfridus Strabo.⁴⁶

The Lincoln Inn lectureship was broken into by Donne's presence in Germany, during the greater part of the year 1619 and the early months of 1620, as chaplain to Viscount Doncaster, who had been sent to the continent to rescue, if possible, the affairs of the Elector Palatine, the King's son-in-law, from impending disaster. Not long

⁴⁵ Gosse, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 109-110.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 113.

after his return from Germany, Donne, ever ambitious, was angling for a place more definitely in the sun.

A rumour reached him that Dr. John Bowle was about to resign the Deanery of Salisbury. There was to be a shuffling of places. The Dean of Westminster was John Williams, afterwards Bishop of Lincoln, who was also Lord Keeper. It was supposed that if Williams was made a bishop Bowle would be translated to Westminster, and Donne hoped for Salisbury. This ingenious little arrangement, however, came to nothing, for Williams did not resign Westminster, and Bowle continued to hold the Deanery of Salisbury until he was made Bishop of Rochester in February, 1630. The following letter refers to Donne's anxiety. It must be admitted that a certain want both of dignity and of candour (for Donne's fortune was, if moderate, no longer at all "penurious") is to be regretted in it. But a begging letter of the beginning of the seventeenth century is not to be measured by modern standards:—

To the Right Honourable my singular good Lord
the Marquess of Buckingham.

May it please your Lordship,—Ever since I had your Lordship's letter I have esteemed myself in possession of Salisbury, and more than Salisbury, of a place in your service; for I took Salisbury as a scale of it. I hear that my Lord Keeper finds reason to continue in Westminster, and I know that neither your Lordship nor he knows how narrow and penurious a fortune I wrestle with in this world. But I am so far from depending upon the assistance of any but your Lordship, as that I do not assist myself so far as with a wish that my Lord Keeper would have left a hole for so poor a worm as I am to have crept in at. All that I mean in using this boldness, of putting myself into your Lordship's presence by this rag of paper, is to tell your Lordship that I lie in a corner, as a clod of clay, attending what kind of vessel it shall please you to make of your Lordship's humblest and thankfullest and devotedest servant.

JOHN DONNE⁴⁷

But if Donne was disappointed of Salisbury an even more desirable post was not long in forthcoming, for in 1621 he was named to succeed Valentine Carey, newly elevated to the episcopate of Exeter, as Dean of St. Paul's.

Here, on his entry into the pulpit of St. Paul's, began the great period of Donne's forensic efforts. Already known as a powerful and fascinating preacher, he had at St. Paul's an opportunity to display those gifts of tongue and pen which made the Jacobean and Caroline sermon the finished work of art that it was. And when St. Dunstan's in the West, ready of access to both the denizens of the Temple and the nearby houses of most of the nobility, fell to him, an even more

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 139-140.

perfect theater for the display of his tremendous gifts was available. From 1626 until his death in 1631, says Gosse, his reputation as a preacher was at its zenith.

During those years he was, without a rival, the most illustrious and the most admired religious orator in England. Lancelot Andrewes died in September of the former year. He had enjoyed a marvelous reputation; he had been called *stella predicantium*. But the celebrity of Donne surpassed that of Andrewes, and was unapproached until Jeremy Taylor came. Age gave to the fiery and yet sombre Dean of St. Paul's an ever-increasing majesty of prestige. His hearers, borne along upon the flow of his sinuous melody, now soft and winning, now vehement in storm, now piercing like a clarion, now rolling in the meditative music of an organ, felt themselves lifted up to heaven itself. In these early days of Charles I a sermon delivered by the Dean of St. Paul's was the most brilliant public entertainment which London had to offer.⁴⁸

But when he stood at last where he had so long desired to be, with the white light of fame beating upon him, Donne was conscious, as indeed he seems always to have been, of coming dissolution. In the early summer of 1627 Lady Danvers, the mother of the Herberts, the inspiration of *The Autumnal*, and for many years a close friend of Donne's, and Lucy, Countess of Bedford, "the countess" of Donne's correspondence, died. The next year Sir Henry Goodyer, long his wealthy benefactor and longer his intimate correspondent, died, as did Christopher Brooke, the friend of his student days. It is no wonder that with his oldest and closest friends dropping around him Donne should have pondered much on death. But the manner of his preparation for it, the posing in his shroud for his funeral monument, and all the rest, which Walton so picturesquely describes, reveals how completely after the manner of the Renaissance he played out his last role, in an atmosphere charged with "beauty and decay."

One final expression of Donne on the matter of his theological tenets is here relevant. On April 1, 1627, Donne had preached before King Charles at Whitehall. The times were delicate, for at the moment the Low Church inclinations of Abbot, Archbishop of Canterbury, were suspect to Charles and Laud, then becoming pre-eminent in the King's favour. Donne was startled, therefore, to receive a letter from Laud demanding that he send a copy of his sermon to the King. Fortunately for Donne nothing came of the episode, but in a letter to Sir Robert Ker—the last in a series touching on the affair—there appears an intriguing sentence:

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 234.

My tenets are always for the preservation of the religion I was born in, and the peace of the State, and the rectifying of the conscience.⁴⁹

On this statement Gosse comments pertinently:

The words here: "the religion I was born in," are very startling, and at first sight incomprehensible. Everybody knew that Donne had been born and bred a Romanist, and that his family were stringent recusants. His aged mother—who now lived, not without some scandal, in the Deanery itself—was a persistent Papist. But I think that Donne, as a staunch High Churchman, would not admit any essential difference between the Catholic religion in which he was born, and that which he now professed.⁵⁰

Whatever was in the mind of Donne when he wrote that sentence, one thing is certain. From the undeviating faith in the Church of Rome, in which he had been born and reared, he had passed step by step and stage by stage to a categorical denial of her universality—of her Catholicity. The belief that had still prevailed among perhaps three Englishmen out of four, at the time of Donne's youth, in a Universal Church and in a universal synthesis of theology, politics, economics and the arts, evolved under her benign protection by the scholastic thinkers, was shattered. For Donne the unity of the mediaeval vision was no more.⁵¹ And just as in his religious experiences he was torn between the old and the new, so as a literary artist he was forced to choose between the aesthetic idealism which had been developed by mediaeval Catholicism and the counter-idealism of the Renaissance which was supplanting the mediaeval tenets. A study of his poetry and prose will reveal how closely his artistic career parallels his religious experiences.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 246. ⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 247.

⁵¹ It may be objected that Donne's Anglicanism, like Hooker's, was conservative; that philosophically it was essentially Thomistic and thus retained the mediaeval viewpoint. To this objection it may be answered that in a time of ideological conflict—when the foundations of the mediaeval world were being shaken by the advent of new conceptions of the meaning and purpose of life—Anglicanism, despite its conservative character, was a party to the general movement for change. This notwithstanding the undoubted fact that many of her theologians wished to stay the unleashed whirlwind. With the theological movement as such this monograph is not concerned. But to study the mind of a poet with an awareness of the particular implications that movement held for him—for him who spoke, for the most part, the language of the older age but was yet in intellectual accord with the new—has seemed a legitimate undertaking.

CHAPTER II

THE MIND OF DONNE: THE NEW SCIENCE

THAT DONNE's spiritual history is indissolubly knit with the development of his artistic career and that his artistic career is a type and a symbol of that vast and startling transformation whereby the Mediaevalism of sixteenth century English letters became the modernism of the seventeenth century—on these points I shall insist again and again. Before Donne, most of English poetry is tinctured with the thought and feeling of the Middle Ages—is in truth mediaeval in all that reflects its essential attitude toward the great underlying problems of human belief and human conduct. After Donne, English poetry is essentially modern in its rejection of the solutions which the Middle Ages had evolved for those same problems. He bridges the gap between the Elizabethans and Milton, catching, fleetingly, an echo or an odor of the older epoch, but his face is turned in the direction of the grim and sightless Titan under whose shadow three centuries and a half of subsequent literary tradition still rests. For John Donne is, in a very real sense, the first of the moderns in the world of letters as Bacon is the first of the moderns in the world of ideas.

But while Donne is the first of the moderns in the world of letters, it would be a fallacy to attempt to study him through the glass of the present. Epochs wax and wane and the life of man is but a moment, whereas such sweeping changes in habits of thinking as came over the western world in the seventeenth century were long in preparation and could not be effected in a year or in a decade. The human mind is naturally conservative, relinquishing slowly ideas which it has acquired through the passing of centuries, and the new attitudes and new beliefs which are subsumed during the period of change are in themselves, inevitably, a mingling of the fading and the crescent ages. Particularly was this true as Mediaevalism yielded before the advancing tread of Modernism. Humanism and the Renaissance were not born Pallas-like from the brain of a time-bestrident Zeus; rather as Burdach says, "Durch starke Fäden hängen sie mit dem Mittelalter zusammen, das sehr langsam, eigentlich erst im 17. Jahrhundert, wirklich überwunden wird."¹

¹ Konrad Burdach, *Reformation, Renaissance, Humanismus*. Berlin: Verlag von Gebrüder Paetel, 1918, p. 143.

It is a total disregard of those "organic filaments" which bound the Renaissance to the past, and an endeavor to search the heart of Donne's mystery with the scalpel of nineteenth century rationalism, which vitiates most of Courthope's analysis of the poet and his problem. For this distinguished literary historian the Donnean era is permeated with the atmosphere of religious panic which prevailed in Victorian England after materialistic science had launched its frontal attack on Christian faith, and the *Essays and Reviews*, and kindred works had undermined it from within. In the tradition of Froude and Buckley, though without the former's rhetoric or the latter's logic, Courthope comes to his task:

Assailed at once by the forces of the new faith, the new science, and the growing spirit of civic liberty, the ancient fabric of Catholicism and Feudalism fell more and more into ruin, but the innovating philosophy was yet far from having established a system of order and authority. The reasoning of Copernicus and Galileo shook men's belief in the truth of the Ptolemaic astronomy: the discoveries of Columbus extended their ideas of the terrestrial globe: the study of Greek and Hebrew literature in the original disturbed the symmetrical methods of scholastic logic: the investigations of the Arabian chemists produced havoc in the realm of encyclopaedic science. Still, the old learning had rooted itself too firmly in the convictions of society to be easily abandoned, and the first effect of the collision between the opposing principles was to propagate a feeling of philosophic doubt. In the sphere of reason a new kind of Pyrrhonism sprang up, which expressed itself in Montaigne's motto, *Que Scay je?* and this disposition of mind naturally exerted another kind of influence on the men of creative imagination. In active life the confusion of the times was the opportunity of the buccaneer and the soldier of fortune, who hoped to advance themselves by their swords; and like these, many poets, in their ideal representations of Nature, seized upon the rich materials of the old and ruined philosophy to decorate the structures which they built out of their lawless fancy. On such foundations rose the school of metaphysical wit, of which the earliest and most remarkable example is furnished in the poetry of John Donne.²

It would be ungracious to quarrel with Courthope's gratuitous assumption of the "ruin" of the old philosophy, for he, after all, was merely stating the peculiarly superior attitude of his generation toward all things mediaeval. Moreover, he wrote just as the nineteenth century was coming to a close and while the spell of the "new science" of his own epoch was still unbroken. Perhaps modern man will never again seem quite so self-sufficient as he did in those dying years of the

² W. J. Courthope, *A History of English Poetry*. London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1903, Vol. III, pp. 147-148.

nineteenth and first decades of the twentieth century. Even then serious thinkers had found alarming fissures in the pseudo-adamant of the material progress which was the cornerstone of the new dispensation, but their voices were few and relatively feeble. The catastrophe of the First World War with its economic and social consequences, the crash of the Fool's Paradise which the treaty of Versailles built out of nationalism run mad, the elevation of that nationalism by the totalitarians into a mystical ideology, the philosophical bankruptcy of our machine civilization have chilled the optimism to which our age fell heir. The result has been that as thinking men have begun to reckon with the deficiencies of their own time they have assumed a more tolerant attitude toward the Middle Ages, which, whatever their defects, had answered with undeviating completeness the eternal question of man's destiny and purpose.

But the Courthope tradition, unfortunately, has persisted and remains today the staple of orthodox Donne criticism—so much so that it savours of rashness to impugn it. Even so careful a critic as Professor Grierson is satisfied to rest on the Courthope line of reasoning:

Mr. Courthope is far too well-informed and judicious a critic to explain Donne's subtle thought and erudite conceits by a reference to "Marini and his followers." Gongora and Du Bartas are alike passed over in silence. What we are shown is the connexion of "metaphysical wit" with the complex and far-reaching changes in men's conception of Nature which make the seventeenth century perhaps the greatest epoch in human thought since human thinking began.³

On the same point, in discussing *An Anatomie of The World and Of the Progresse of the Soule*, Professor Grierson has more to say:

One of the most interesting strands of thought common to the twin poems is the reflection on the disintegrating effect of the New Learning. Copernicus' displacement of the earth, and the consequent disturbance of the accepted mediaeval cosmology with its concentric arrangements of elements and heavenly bodies, arrests and disturbs Donne's imagination much as the later geology with its revelation of vanished species and first suggestion of a doctrine of evolution absorbed and perturbed Tennyson when he wrote *In Memoriam* and throughout his life. No other poet of the seventeenth century known to me shows the same sensitiveness to the consequences of the new discoveries of traveller, astronomer, physiologist and physician as Donne.⁴

The Courthope interpretation of Donne's attitude toward the "new science" is continued by Evelyn M. Simpson⁵ and Louis I.

³ *The Poems of John Donne*. Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1912, Vol. II, p. v.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 188-189.

⁵ Cf. *A Study of the Prose Works of John Donne*. Oxford: At the University Press, 1924, pp. 185, 189.

Bredvold⁶ in the middle 1920's, as it is in the succeeding decade by George Williamson⁷ and Mario Praz. In the year of the Donne tercentenary the latter declared that the "quaintness" of metaphysical poetry becomes explicable "if we try to realize what must have been the position of those poets living between two worlds, two cultures, in an age of scientific revolution." Donne himself, according to this critic, offers the best illustration of the peculiar position in which the metaphysical poets found themselves, for while his thought was in many ways scholastic, yet he differed from Dante, with whom he had certain affinities, in the circumstance that "living in an age of scientific revolution" he "could not help surveying with a sceptic's eye the state of confusion presented by the changing world."⁸

The same fallacy of reading a nineteenth century coloring into Donne's work and thought, this time, however, in a fashion scarcely convincing, is committed by Jack Lindsay. Lindsay, concerned with proving that it was the scepticism of Giordano Bruno which fructified Donne's muse, writes:

It is of interest that Donne, young and hopeful, found an exalting stimulus in the "new philosophy" and its revolutionary acclamation of change and energy; later, when his social aspirations had failed, he found in them only the causes of disintegration:

The element of fire is quite put out. . . .⁹

And still more recent is a work by Charles Monroe Coffin in which the author maintains that it is the "preoccupation with the new astronomy and its implications of confusion that constitute the backbone of Donne's poetical thinking."¹⁰ Surely this is "after-Tennyson-*fin-de-siècle*" doctrine with a vengeance.¹¹

It would have saved Courthope and those who have followed in his footsteps a grievous and irretrievable error had they realized with Miss Ramsay that "La philosophie scolastique après tout est moins

⁶ "The Religious Thought of Donne in Relation to Medieval and Later Traditions," *Studies in Shakespeare, Milton, and Donne*. New York and London: Macmillan Company, 1925, University of Michigan Publications, Language and Literature, Vol. I, pp. 193-232.

⁷ "Mutability, Decay and Seventeenth Century Melancholy," *Journal of English Literary History*, Vol. II (1935), pp. 121-150.

⁸ "Donne's Relation to the Poetry of his Time," *A Garland for John Donne 1631-1931*. Ed. by Theodore Spencer. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1931.

⁹ *London Times, Literary Supplement*, July 11, 1936, p. 580.

¹⁰ *Vide* Charles Monroe Coffin, *John Donne and the New Philosophy*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1937, p. 105.

¹¹ For a protest against the extent to which modern criticism has gone in reading a scientific scepticism into Donne, *vide* Merritt Y. Hughes, "Kidnapping Donne," *Essays in Criticism: Second Series*. University of California Press, 1934, pp. 61-89.

un système spécial qu'une méthode de penser."¹² Moreover, the mortal enmity of mediaeval thought toward science and the enquiring mind is a myth born in post-mediaeval times which no intelligent reader of Aquinas (or Chaucer, for that matter) can accept. Again Miss Ramsay has done well in spitting this hydra-headed error.

La pensée du moyen âge, toute théologique qu'elle était, ne s'était pas montrée en général hostile à la science autant qu'elle la comprenait. Il y avait, sans doute, certains penseurs qui, portés vers un mysticisme ou un piétisme spécial, excluaient de leur économie les sciences physiques, comme du reste toute étude sauf celle d'une théologie pour ainsi dire bien mutilée. Mais les grands mystiques, comme les autres penseurs, s'étaient montrés plutôt amis de la science et de toutes aspirations vers une culture intellectuelle plus étendue. A la vraie science, telle que les modernes l'entendent, se mêlaient sans doute des superstitions innombrables. L'astrologie et l'alchimie remplaçaient mal, selon nos idées, l'astronomie et la chimie. Au fond, il n'y avait rien d'hostile entre la théologie, directrice de la pensée, et un véritable intérêt pour les sciences. Roger Bacon surtout l'avait montré, quoique ses théories ne fussent pas toutes acceptées. C'était plutôt parmi les ennemis des recherches scientifiques que l'on cherchait les athées des siècles antérieurs à Donne. Desbordes, qui en 1569 mit en français le livre de Sacrobosco (John of Holywood) *La Sphère du Monde*, parle ainsi dans sa préface:—

"Platon n'a point dit sans raison que les yeux ont été donnés à l'homme à cause de l'astronomie. Et certainement pour ceste cause seule nous les avons, et aussi afin qu'ils nous puissent conduire à faire recherche afin qu'ayons quelque coignoissance de Dieu et des ses secrets admirables en tant que l'homme peut sçavoir. Et pour ceste cause nous voyons, que de tous les Philosophes seulement ceux-là ont esté Athéistes, qui ont mesprisé l'Astronomie, nié la Providence, par mesme moyen ils ont aussi osté l'immortalité des âmes . . . Il y a maintenant quelques-uns qui ressemblans aux Epicuriens, se moquent de tout ce genre de doctrine . . . Comme il est certain que les parties de Physique, c'est-à-dire, de la science des choses naturelles, ne déroge et ne contrarie aucunement à la religion chrestienne, nous en dirons autant de l'Astrologie . . ."

Donne aurait été tout à fait d'accord avec ces paroles de Desbordes, dont il a peut-être connu le livre, puisqu'il a été souvent en France, et avait tant de goût pour la lecture.¹³

It may be worth recalling that several years after Donne's death, John Milton was still teaching astronomy to his nephews from the *De sphaera mundi* of Joannes a Sacrobosco. Just why the critics should find it impossible to believe that Donne's primary concern

¹² *Les doctrines médiévales chez Donne, le poète métaphysicien de l'Angleterre 1573-1631*. London: Oxford University Press, deuxième édition, 1924, p. 261.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 98-99.

with the new astronomy, like Milton's a generation later,¹⁴ was poetic rather than theological is a bit difficult to understand.

If Miss Ramsay has rendered a signal service to those who would approach Donne and his era from the viewpoint of historic truth and not from the viewpoint of a venerable but mistaken tradition, it may be permissible to insist (albeit in so doing one runs counter to a well-nigh universal misconception of three centuries' standing), that the scholastic synthesis was bound up with no certain conception of the world and its inter-spatial relations. As a vast "méthode de penser" it was concerned primarily as Hulme says, "with the subordination of man to certain absolute values, the radical imperfection of man, the doctrine of original sin"; and the essential relations which it posited between man and his Creator (for there could be no sin without an outraged Deity) were no more valid in a geocentric universe than in one where the poor earth, like a neglected atom, spun crazily at the mercy of stellar powers mightier than its own. Again, one should bear in mind (although the slightest acquaintance with scholastic thought will make such an admonition seem quite unnecessary) that not only was the continuance of the Ptolemaic system not vital to the mediaeval stability, but, as a matter of fact, that system by no means enjoyed an undisputed authority before the rise of Copernicism. It was attacked particularly by the Arabian followers of Aristotle who did not like the modifications which Hipparchus and his disciple Claudius Ptolemy had made in the master's theory, and many Catholic thinkers added their note of disapproval. St. Thomas himself was perplexed, but his verdict gives ample testimony to the freedom which scientific speculation enjoyed under the scholastic dominance.

The suppositions which astronomers have imagined are not to be accounted necessarily true. Although these hypotheses seem to save the appearances, we must not say that they are thereby proved to be facts, because perhaps it would be possible to explain the apparent movements of the stars by some other method which men have not yet excogitated.¹⁵

Moreover, that broad speculative freedom did not die with Aquinas. At Paris in the fourteenth century an unknown teacher declared that "si terra moveretur et caelum quiesceret esset in mundo melior

¹⁴ Cf. Marjorie Nicolson, "Milton and the Telescope." *Journal of English Literary History*, Vol. II (1935), pp. 1-32.

¹⁵ *Expositio super Libro de Caelo et Mundo*. lib. II, lect. XVII. Quoted by James Brodrick, S.J., in *The Life and Work of Blessed Robert Francis Bellarmine, S.J. 1542-1621*. London: Burns Oates and Washbourne, Ltd., 1928, Vol. II, pp. 330-331.

dispositio."¹⁶ This same doctrine was taught by Nicholas of Oresmes about 1362. Copernicus, it will be remembered, was not born until 1473.

Here I must stress a distinction which is often overlooked. The mediaevalists' passion for systematization, the general centripetal movement of their thought did lead them at times in the absence of "reasons to prove," to have recourse to "fictions to please." So it was with their astronomical-philosophical conceptions. They thought of the moon and the planets as fixed in their divers and distant spheres and revolving around the earth. Their problem then was to reconcile this conception with the apparent movements of the heavens. Beyond the planetary universe were the fixed stars "held permanently in place by nails of gold in a sky of crystal," which, under the guidance of the divine intelligences, swung daily around the earth. Then, because their minds were never weary of pondering the majesty of the heavens, they conceived of these as made up of an essence quite different from and superior to the sub-lunar world. From this point it was a natural step to theorize upon the influence of the celestial universe upon terrestrial affairs. But all of these ideas, so naïve to the modern mind, were, it must be remembered, hypotheses—not theses—as the teachings of Aquinas and others show. The essence of the scholastic attitude toward life was not bound up with the truth or falsity of scientific hypotheses. The concepts which are common to the great scholastic thinkers, Bonaventure, St. Thomas, Duns Scotus, are "the finite and the infinite, act and potency, matter and form, essence and existence, individuality and individuation, efficiency and finality, sensation and thought, the spiritual soul and material body";¹⁷ and these it is which constitute the heart of the scholastic thought. As for the advent of the system which is so universally assumed to have rent asunder the realm of the old learning and shaken the pillars of religious faith, it is too often forgotten that Nicholas Copernicus was himself a devout priest and that his epoch-making work *De Revolutionibus Orbium Coelestium* was dedicated to Pope Paul III. To insist upon this is not to deny that as the framework of a decadent scholasticism stiffened and cracked a horde of philosophasters, clinging with superstitious reverence to the thoughts

¹⁶ Cf. Maurice de Wulf, *Philosophy and Civilization in the Middle Ages*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1922, p. 113.

¹⁷ Vide Maurice de Wulf, *History of Mediaeval Philosophy*. New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1926, Vol. II, p. 315.

of the past, would have enshrined the accidents of their heritage along with its substance.

So much for the relation of scholasticism to the old and the new science. But what of Donne and his reaction to the new scientific theories which were permeating the world in which he moved? Had "the reasoning of Copernicus and Kepler and Galileo" shaken his "belief in the truth of the Ptolemaic astronomy?" On the contrary, says Miss Ramsay:

Le système physique que Donne accepté est celui qui a servi de cadre à Dante, et qui servira également à Milton. Chez ce dernier pourtant, on se rend compte d'un changement qui est survenu dans les idées. Milton est encore un théologien, mais l'esprit, métaphysique ne le domine plus. En ce sens tout est changé, le cadre n'est qu'un cadre. La cosmologie médiévale, toute fausse qu'elle ait pu être au point de vue scientifique, renfermait pourtant, au point de vue métaphysique, une vérité symbolique. Cette vérité, Dante avant tout a su l'apprécier et en tirer parti dans son oeuvre. Donne à son tour, s'en aperçoit et s'en sert.¹⁸

But let us weigh the testimony of Donne himself. In 1609 he wrote as follows to his bosom friend, Sir Henry Goodyer:

I often compare not you and me, but the sphere in which your resolutions are and my wheel, both I hope concentric to God: for methinks the new astronomy is thus applicable well, that we which are a little earth should rather move towards God, than that He which is fulfilling, and can come no whither, should move towards us.

To your life full of variety nothing is old, nor new to mine; and as to that life all stickings and hesitations seem stupid and stony, so to this, all fluid slipperinesses and transitory migrations seem giddy and feathery. In that life one is ever in the porch or postern, going in or out, never within his house himself: it is a garment made of remnants, a life ravelled out into ends, a line discontinued, and a number of small wretched points, useless, because they concur not: a life built of past and future, not proposing any constant present; they have more pleasures than we, but not more pleasure; they joy oftener, we longer; and no man but of so much understanding as may deliver him from being a fool, would change with a madman, which had a better proportion of wit in his often *lucidis*.

You know they which dwell farthest from the sun, if in any convenient distance, have longer days, better appetites, better digestion, better growth, and longer life: and all these advantages have their minds who are well removed from the scorplings and dazzlings and exhalings of the world's glory: but neither of our lives are in such extremes; for you living at court without ambition, which would burn you, or envy, which would divest others, live in the sun, not in the fire: and I which live in the country without

¹⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. 246.

stupefying, am not in darkness, but in shadow, which is not no light, but a pallid, waterish, and diluted one.¹⁹

The first paragraph of this letter illustrates admirably the manner in which mediaeval thought in general received the theories of the new astronomy; the widening of the frontiers of knowledge might rearrange the position of the component parts of the universe, but whether the earth were the center of that universe, or the sun, man's world was still "concentric to God." I cite the two apparently irrelevant paragraphs that follow to show in what a matter-of-fact fashion the reference to the new astronomy was made in passing to matters of personal chit-chat.

In the same year, 1609, in the opening lines of his *Elegie on the Lady Marckham*, Donne wrote:

Man is the World, and death th' Ocean,
 To which God gives the lower parts of man.
 This Sea invirons all, and though as yet
 God hath set markes, and bounds, twixt us and it,
 Yet doth it rore, and gnaw, and still pretend,
 And breaks our bankes, when ere it takes a friend.
 Then our land waters (tears of passion) vent;
 Our waters, then, above our firmament,
 (Teares which our Soule doth for her sins let fall)
 Take all a brackish tast, and Funerall,
 And even these teares, which should wash sin, are sin.

The outlandish figure in lines seven and eight is based on the seventh verse of the first chapter of the Book of Genesis, and Donne's interpretation is far more literal than that of St. Thomas. The words of the Angelic Doctor actually are apt to sound dangerously modern to unaccustomed modern ears:

Respondeo dicendum quod, sicut dicit Augustinus, 2 super Genes. ad litt., c. 5, in fin., *major est Scripturae huius auctoritas quam omnis humani ingenii capacitas. Unde quoquo modo et qualeslibet aquae ibi sint, eas tamen ibi esse minime dubitamus.*—Quales autem sint illae aquae, non eodem modo ab omnibus assignatur. Origenes enim dicit, hom. 1 in Gen., non longe a princ., quod aquae illae quae super caelos sunt, sunt spirituales substantiae. Unde in psalm. 148, 4 dicitur: *Aquae, quae super caelos sunt, laudent nomen Domini*; et Dan. 3, 60: *Benedicite, aquae omnes quae super caelos sunt, Domino.*—Sed ad hoc respondet Basilius, in 3 in Hexam., non procul a fin., quod hoc non dicitur, eo quod aquae sint rationales creaturae, sed quia consideratio earum prudenter a sensum habentibus contemplata glorificationem perficit Creatoris. Unde ibidem dicitur idem de igne, et grandine, et huiusmodi; de quibus constat quod non sunt rationales creaturae.

¹⁹ Gosse, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 218–219.

Dicendum est ergo quod sunt aquae corporales. Sed quales aquae sint oportet diversimode definire secundum diversam de firmamento sententiam. —Si enim per firmamentum intelligatur caelum sidereum, quod ponitur esse de natura quatuor elementorum; pari ratione et aquae quae super caelos sunt, eiusdem naturae poterunt credi cum elementaribus aquis. Si autem per firmamentum intelligatur caelum sidereum, quod non sit de natura quatuor elementorum, tunc et aquae illae quae sunt supra firmamentum non erunt de natura elementarium aquarum. Sed sicut secundum Strabum, in Glos. ord. super illud: *In princ. creavit*, dicitur caelum empyreum, id est, igneum, propter solis splendorem; ita dicetur aliud caelum aqueum propter solam diaphaneitatem, quod est supra caelum sidereum. —Positio etiam quod firmamentum sit alterius naturae praeter quatuor elementa, adhuc potest dici quod aquas dividit, si per aquam non elementum aquae, sed materiam informem intelligamus, ut Augustinus dicit, 1 super Genes. contra Manichaeos, cap. 5 et 7, quia secundum hoc, quidquid est inter corpora, dividit aquas ab aquis.²⁰

That that particular figure was often in Donne's mind is evident from the fact that he had used it almost a decade earlier in *The Progresse of the Soule*. The occasion is the description of the whale in whose body the wandering soul is imprisoned.

At every stroake his brazen finnes do take,
 More circles in the broken sea they make
 Then cannons voices, when the aire they teare:
 His ribs are pillars, and his high-arch'd roofe
 Of barke that blunts best steele, is thunder-proofe:
 Swimme in him swallow'd Dolphins, without feare,
 And feele no sides, as if his vast wombe were
 Some Inland sea, and ever as hee went
 He spouted rivers up, as if he ment
 To joyne our seas, with seas above the firmament.

Another example of the extent to which the Ptolemaic conceptions filled the mind of Donne is supplied by the following extract from a letter almost certainly addressed to Sir Henry Goodyer, and written long after Galileo had opened his attack upon the Aristotelian tradition:

The first sphere only which is resisted by nothing, absolves his course every day; and so doth true friendship well placed often iterate in act or purpose the same offices. But as the lower spheres, subject to the violence of that, and yet naturally encouraged to a reluctance against it, have therefore many distractions and eccentricities, and some trepidations, and so return but lamely and lately to the same place and office; so that friendship

²⁰ Pars I, qu. LXVIII, art. II. *Summa Theologica*. Parisiis, 1887. Grierson, in his note on the *Elegie*, cites this passage in the *Summa*. *Vide* Vol. II, pp. 210-211.

which is not moved primarily by the proper intelligence, discretion, and about the natural centre, virtue, doth perchance sometimes, some things, somewhat like true friendship; but hath many deviations, which are straying into new loves (not of other men; for that is proper to true wise friendship, which is not a marrying; but of other things), and hath such trepidations as keep it from showing itself, where great persons do not love; and it returns to the true first station and place of friendship planetarily, which is uncertainly and seldom.²¹

Side by side with these examples of Donne's borrowings from the Ptolemaic astronomy should be placed two interesting passages in *Ignatius his Conclave* in which he reveals an equal intimacy with the new astronomy.²² The first of these occurs very near the beginning of the work:

I was in an *Extasie* and *My little wandring sportful Soul, Guest, and companion of my body*, had liberty to wander through all places, and to survey and reckon all the roomes, and all the volumes of the heavens, and to comprehend the situation, the dimensions, the nature, the people & the policie, both of the swimming Ilands, the *Planets*, and of all those which are fixed in the Firmament. Of which, I think it an honester part as yet to be silent, then to doe *Galilaeo* wrong by speaking of it, who of late hath summoned the other worlds, the Stars to come nearer to him, and give him an account of themselves, Or to *Keppler*, who (as himselfe testifies of himselfe) *ever since Tycho Braches death, hath received it into his care, that no new thing should be done in heaven without his knowledge*. For by the law, *Prevention* must take place; and therefore what they have found and discovered first, I am content they speake and utter first.²³

The second does not appear until near the end of the satire. Lucifer is speaking to Ignatius:

But since I may neither forsake this *kingdome*, nor divide it, this only remedy is left: I will write to the Bishop of *Rome*, he shall call *Galilaeo* the *Florentine* to him, who by this time hath thoroughly instructed himselfe of all the Hills, Woods, and Cities in the new world, the *Moone*. And since he effected so much with his first *Glasses*, that he saw the *Moon* in so neer a distance, that he gave himselfe satisfaction of all, and the least parts in her,

²¹ Gosse, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 225-226.

²² Marjorie Nicolson, in "Kepler, The Somnium, and John Donne," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. I (1940), p. 264, has called attention to an interesting note in the 1634 edition of Kepler's *Somnium*: "Fallor an author [sic] Satyrae procacis, cui nomen Conclave Ignatianum, exemplar nactus erat huius opusculi; pungit enim me nominatim etiam in ipso principio." In the same article Miss Nicolson has traced an interesting chain of relationships through which Kepler's theories were likely to have been transmitted by the agency of his friend, John Ericksen, to the English astronomer, Thomas Hariot, and thence to Donne, a friend of the latter.

²³ *Paradoxes . . . also Ignatius his Conclave*, . . . London: Printed by T.N. for Humphrey Moseley at the Prince's Armes in St. Paul's Churchyard, 1652, pp. 108-109.

when now being grown to more perfection in his Art, he shall have made new *Glasses* and they received a hallowing from the *Pope*, he may draw the *Moon*, like a Boat floating upon the water, as near the Earth as he will. And thither (because they ever claim that those imployments of discovery belong to them) shall all the Jesuits be transferred, and easily unite and reconcile the *Lunatick Church* to the *Roman Church*. . . .²⁴

Whether in the scarcely veiled sarcasms of Lucifer's remarks on the discoveries of Galileo one may catch the accents of Donne may be open to question, but it is certain that amid the evidences of the great good humour which obviously flooded Donne's mind as he wrote those lines one looks in vain for some trace of that "new kind of Pyrrhonism" which Courthope insists was superinduced by the discoveries of Copernicus and his followers, or for some betrayal of "the sceptic's eye" with which Praz thinks he surveyed "the changing world."

There is, however, one passage in Donne's poetry more than any other upon which the proponents of the Courthope theory base their conclusions. It is the famous "and new Philosophy calls all in doubt" passage in *An Anatomie of the World*.

And new Philosophy calls all in doubt
The Element of fire is quite put out;
The sun is lost and th' earth, and no mans wit
Can well direct him where to looke for it.
And freely men confesse that this world's spent,
When in the Planets, and the Firmament
They seeke so many new; they see that this
Is crumbled out againe to his Atomies.
'Tis all in peeces, all cohaerence gone;
All just supply, and all Relation:

Read in the spirit of the nineteenth century these lines very definitely assume an air of intellectual and spiritual bewilderment. Translate them into the idiom of Tennyson and they might well serve as an epitome of the Victorian confusion in the years when Huxley was baiting Bishop Wilberforce and Tyndall was solemnly reading God out of the universe. But the spiritual timbre of Donne's century was not that of Tennyson's, and to inject the melancholy wavering of the latter into it is to commit one of the commonest but least pardonable of critical errors. Just how seriously had the "displacement" of the earth and the "discrediting" of the concentric arrangement of the elements,—earth, water, air, and fire²⁵—disturbed the equilib-

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 196-197.

²⁵ "The philosophy of Galileo and Copernicus has displaced the earth and discredited the concentric arrangement of the elements,—earth, water, air, fire." Grierson, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 189.

rium of Donne's mind? His own words supply the best answer. That he was borrowing from "the philosophy of Galileo and Copernicus" for rhetorical effect only seems evident when later in the same poem he turns with equal subtlety to toy with the ingenious Ptolemaic theory of epicycles and eccentrics:

For the worlds beauty is decai'd or gone,
Beauty, that's colour and proportion.
We thinke the heavens enjoy their Sphericall,
Their round proportion embracing all.
But yet their various and perplexed course,
Observ'd in divers ages, doth enforce
Men to finde out so many Eccentrique parts,
Such divers downe-right lines, such overthwarts,
As disproportion that pure forme:

The astronomical ideas expressed in these lines are purely Ptolemaic, nor need the reflection on the decay of the world be traced to the "new science," for from St. Cyprian onward this theme is prevalent in the mediaeval story. But note now the lines which follow:

It teares

The Firmament in eight and forty sheires,
And in these Constellations then arise
New starres, and old doe vanish from our eyes:
As though heav'n suffered earthquakes, peace or war,
When new Towers rise, and old demolish't are.

Here with that complete ease and perfect casualness, which is characteristic of the Renaissance mingling of the old and new, Donne passes from the Ptolemaic "eight and forty sheires" to the events which are commonly said to have introduced chaos into the astronomical scene—namely, the observing of new stars by Tycho Brahe and by Galileo and Kepler.²⁶ The extent of the confusion in Donne's mind may be judged from the tenor of the verses immediately succeeding:

²⁶ The real point of Donne's concern with the new astronomical ideas is indicated by Marjorie Nicolson: "... it is entirely characteristic of Donne's interest in novelty that the new stars vanish from his poetry as inevitably as they vanished from the eyes of the observers, whether because the idea of *novae* became so established as to cease to be novel, or because Donne's restless imagination passed on to other stimuli, who can tell?" "The 'New Astronomy' and English Literary Imagination," *Studies in Philology*, Vol. XXXII (1935), p. 453. In justice to Miss Nicolson it must be said that this sentence does not represent the whole of her ideas concerning Donne and the new astronomy. Lines 6-8 from *To the Countesse of Huntingdon* she thinks are evidence that the scientific defense of a new star "had threatened orthodoxy." "Cosmic Voyages," *A Journal of English Literary History*, Vol. VII (1940), p. 93. In the same article (p. 96) she speaks enigmatically of Donne's initial satirical reflection of the "new ideas, which later were to lead him to his most profound conclusions, and to another way of life."

They have impal'd within a Zodiacke
 The free-borne Sun, and keepe twelve Signes awake
 To watch his steps; the Goat and Crab controule,
 And fright him backe, who else to either Pole
 (Did not these Tropiques fetter him) might runne:
 For his course is not round; nor can the Sunne
 Perfit a Circle, or maintaine his way
 One inch direct; but where he rose to-day
 He comes no more, but with a couzening line,
 Steales by that point, and so is Serpentine:
 And seeming weary with his reeling thus,
 He meanes to sleepe, being now false nearer us.
 So, of the Starres which boast that they doe runne
 In Circle still, none ends where he begun.

Williamson, indeed, has made much of the supposed scientific scepticism in these lines,²⁷ but a careful reading of them will show that they are not primarily concerned with either Ptolemaic or the "new" astronomy, but rather with a description of the indicated phenomena as they appear to the earth-bound observer. It is likely that at the time he wrote this poem Donne was familiar with Kepler's law dealing with the elliptical movement of the heavenly bodies (it was Kepler who announced in 1609 that the movement of the spheres was not circular), but this point is immaterial. That the sun does not "perfit a Circle" or return "where he rose today," is due to the fact that it does not stand still but travels on the ecliptic, a fact basic to the theory of Ptolemy as well as to that of Kepler. A few months later in a letter to Sir Henry Wotton, written early in 1612, hence perhaps a year after the *An Anatomie of the World*, Donne declared: "You know that for air we are sure we apprehend and enjoy it, but when this air is rarefied into fire, we begin to dispute whether it be an element or no. . . ." ²⁸ And in *The Second Anniversarie* written the same year he thus describes an imaginary journey of the soul:

Thinke that a rustie Peece, discharg'd, is flowne
 In peeces, and the bullet is his owne,
 And freely flies: This to thy Soule allow,
 Thinke thy shell broke, thinke thy Soule hatch'd but now.
 And think this slow-pac'd soule, which late did cleave
 To a body, and went but by the bodies leave,
 Twenty, perchance, or thirty mile a day,

²⁷ "Mutability, Decay, and Seventeenth Century Melancholy," *A Journal of English Literary History*, Vol. II (1935), p. 143.

²⁸ Gosse, *op. cit.*, p. 291.

Dispatches in a minute all the way
 Twixt heaven, and earth; she stayes not in the ayre,
 To looke what Meteors there themselves prepare;
 She carries no desire to know, nor sense,
 Whether th' ayres middle region be intense;
 For th' Element of fire, she doth not know,
 Whether she past by such a place or no;
 She baits not at the Moone, nor cares to trie
 Whether in that new world, men live, and die.
Venus retards her not, to enquire, how shee
 Can, (being one starre) Hesper, and Vesper bee;
 Hee that charm'd Argus eyes, sweet Mercury,
 Workes not on her, who now is growne all eye;
 Who, if she meet the body of the Sunne,
 Goes through, not staying till his course be runne;
 Who findes in Mars his Campe no corps of Guard;
 Nor is by Jove, nor by his father barr'd;
 But ere she can consider how she went,
 At once is at, and through the Firmament.

Quite apparently not only has the "element of fire" been very nearly if not quite relumed in the intervening months, but the Ptolemaic conception of the firmament and of the planetary arrangement has likewise been restored.

In this same connection these opening lines from his *Goodfriday, 1613. Riding Westward* should be considered:

Let mans Soule be a Spheare, and then, in this,
 The intelligence that moves, devotion is,
 And as the other Spheares, by being growne
 Subject to forraigne motions, lose their owne,
 And being by others hurried every day,
 Scarce in a yeare their naturall forme obey:
 Pleasure or businesse, so, our Soules admit
 For their first mover, and are whirld by it.

And these lines from the same poem:

Could I behold those hands which span the Poles,
 And turne all spheares at once . . .²⁹

Again it is evident that the chaos into which the Ptolemaic system had supposedly devolved in *An Anatomie* had been almost miraculously reduced to order within three years.

Even more striking because of the lateness of the date is this

²⁹ For an interesting textual note on this passage, *vide* Williamson, "Textual Difficulties in the Interpretation of Donne's Poetry," *Modern Philology*, Vol. XXXVIII (1940), pp. 66-68.

passage from Donne's sermon preached on the occasion of the funeral of Sir William Cokayne, December 12, 1626:

In entering upon the first branch of our first part, that in spiritual things nothing is perfect, we may well afford a kind of spiritual nature to knowledge; and how imperfect is all our knowledge! What one thing do we know perfectly? Whether we consider arts, or sciences, the servant knows but according to the proportion of his master's knowledge in that art, and the scholar knows but according to the proportion of his master's knowledge in that science; young men mend not their sight by using old men's spectacles; and yet we look upon nature but with Aristotle's spectacles, and upon the body of man, but with Galen's, and upon the frame of the world, but with Ptolemy's spectacles. Almost all knowledge is rather like a child that is embalmed to make mummy, than that is nursed to make a man; rather conserved in the stature of the first age, then grown to be greater; and if there be any addition to knowledge it is rather a new knowledge, than a greater knowledge; rather a singularity in a desire of proposing something that was not known at all before, than an improving, an advancing, a multiplying of former inceptions; and by that means, no knowledge comes to be perfect.³⁰

This statement might be interpreted as meaning that for Donne only the unenlightened still follow Aristotle and Ptolemy and that he considers himself apart, but how can such a theory be reconciled with his multitudinous Aristotelian and Ptolemaic leanings elsewhere? Moreover, the calm reliance on the intellectual achievements of the past and the equally evident conservatism in viewing the possibilities of pushing forward the boundaries of human knowledge³¹ seem scarcely consonant with the atmosphere of spiritual dismay which Courthope and those who follow in his footsteps have seen in the "new Philosophy calls all in doubt" passage.

The truth, it seems to me, is that the enquiring and avid mind of Donne, driven on by that peculiar intellectual restlessness which characterized his period, seized indiscriminately upon all information that came his way and pressed it into the service of his art. The men of the Renaissance had a capacity for intellectual assimilation which was, to say the least, remarkable; for them a new idea was no occasion for intellectual indigestion. Nor were they likely to be perturbed by a new theory of the universe, no matter how startling the implications of that theory might be.³² For they were the heirs and the

³⁰ Henry Alford, *The Works of John Donne*. London: John W. Parker, 1839, Vol. III, pp. 471-472.

³¹ For a conflicting view, *vide* Bredvold, *op. cit.*

³² The simultaneous currency of the Ptolemaic, Tychonic, and Copernican conceptions of astronomy in England in the seventeenth century is noted by Miss Nicholson in "A World in the Moon," *Smith College Studies in Modern Language*, Vol. XVIII, No. 2 (Jan., 1936), pp. 6-7.

spiritual children of the men of the Middle Ages for whom the world was full of the strange and the wonderful. The universe might, indeed, be no longer geocentric, but for the vast majority of men, of whom Donne was surely one, it remained theo-centric, and the transmutation was the paltriest of details. It unquestionably is difficult in an age such as ours to regain the angle of vision from which they surveyed the mystery of the universe, but it will not suffice for purposes of critical integrity to substitute a Victorian or post-Victorian perspective which makes an insoluble riddle of that mystery.³³

Here, too, may be cited relevant lines from one of the numerous verse epistles addressed by Donne to the Countess of Bedford, which Grierson thinks was probably written as late as 1614 and certainly not before 1609.

As new Philosophy arrests the Sunne
 And bids the passive earth about it runne,
 So wee have dull'd our minde, it hath no ends;
 Onely the bodie's busie, and pretends;
 As dead low earth eclipses and controules
 The quick high Moone: so doth the body, Soules.
 In none but us, are such mixt engines found,
 As hands of double office: For, the ground
 We till with them; and them to heav'n wee raise;
 Who prayer-lesse labours, or, without this, prayes,
 Doth but one halfe, that's none; He which said, *Plough*
And looke not back, to looke up doth allow.

Is it not evident that the Copernicism mentioned here, far from creating an atmosphere of dogmatic doubt is, on the contrary, assumed by, and put to the service of, a religious argument?

As with his astronomy, so with his other scientific ideas, Donne's thought shows a curious mingling of the old and the new. Nowhere is this more true than in his attitude toward medicine. Whether, as Walton wrote, he knew all

The grounds and use of Physicke; but because
 'Twas mercenary wav'd it,

his references to medical terms and medical lore both in his poetry and his prose are second only to his references to astronomy in both

³³ I am not forgetting that a Giordano Bruno and a Montaigne had voiced a fundamental scepticism before Donne's time. For that matter infidelity in one form or another was no unheard of phenomenon during the great centuries of Christian faith. I am insisting merely on the spiritual temper of Donne's age, taken as a whole, from which, on the testimony of his own words, I can find no reason to isolate him.

interest and frequency. The theory of the humours, derived from Hippocrates through Plato and Aristotle, modified in turn by Galen, and then by the mediaeval Arabians, and reworked by the Christian mediaevalists, is often present in his thought (one needs only to recall Burton's massive treatment of the humours to wonder how any man of the seventeenth century could escape the subject), as in *A Letter to the Lady Carey, and Mrs. Essex Riche, From Amyens*:

For when through tastlesse flat humilitie
In dow bak'd men some harmelessenes we see,
'Tis but his *flegme* that's *Vertuous*, and not Hee:

Soe is the Blood sometimes; who ever ran
To danger unimportun'd, he was than
No better then a *sanguine* Vertuous man.

So cloysterall men, who, in pretence of feare
All contributions to this life forbear,
Have Vertue in *Melancholy*, and only there.

Spirituell *Cholerique* Crytiques, which in all
Religions find faults, and forgive no fall,
Have, through this zeale, Vertue but in their Gall.

And again in a verse epistle *To Sr Henry Wotton*:

Onely in this one thing, be no Galenist: To make
Courts hot ambitions wholesome, do not take
A dramme of Countries dulnesse; do not adde
Correctives, but as chymiques, purge the bad.

In a letter to Sir Thomas Lucy, written October 9, 1607, Donne takes note of the development and advance in mediaeval science:

This, as it appears in all sciences, so most manifestly in physic, which for a long time considering nothing but plain curing, and that but by example and precedent, the world at last longed for some certain canons and rules, how these cures might be accomplished; and when men are inflamed with this desire, and that such a fire breaks out that rages and consumes infinitely by heat of argument, except some of authority interpose.

This produced Hippocrates his Aphorisms; and the world slumbered or took breath in his resolution divers hundreds of years; and then in Galen's time, which was not satisfied with the effect of curing, nor with the knowledge how to cure, broke out another desire of finding out the causes why those simples wrought these effects. Then Galen, rather to say their stomachs than that he gave them enough, taught them the qualities of the four elements, and arrested them upon this, that all differences of qualities proceeded from them.

And after (not much before our time), men perceiving that all effects in

physic could not be derived from these beggarly and impotent properties of the elements, and that therefore they were driven often to that miserable refuge of specific form, and of antipathy and sympathy, we see the world hath turned upon new principles which are attributed to Paracelsus but (indeed) too much to his honour.³⁴

Paracelsus, himself, although referred to somewhat deprecatingly here, was often in Donne's thought. His theory of the "natural balsamum" is reflected again and again in Donne. We find it in one of the epistles *To the Countesse of Bedford*:

In every thing there naturally growes
A *Balsamum* to keepe it fresh, and new,
If 'twere not injur'd by extrinsique blowes;

We meet it again in *An Anatomie of the World*:

But though it be too late to succour thee,
Sicke World, yea, dead, yea putrified, since shee
Thy intrinsique balmes, and thy preservative,
Can never be renew'd, . . .

But it is not alone in his poetry that Donne betrays his fondness for figures based on this Paracelsian concept. Adorned with all his pulpit eloquence it occurs in one of the Whitsunday sermons:

. . . everything hath in it, as physicians use to call it, *Naturale balsamum*, A Natural balsamum, which, if any wound or hurt which that creature hath received be kept clean from extrinsic putrefaction, will heal of itself. We are so far from that natural balsamum, as that we have a natural poison in us, original sin: for that, original sin, (as it hath relation to God, as all sin is a violating of God) God being the God of mercy, and the God of life, because it deprives us of both those, of mercy and of life, in opposition to mercy it is called anger and wrath, (*We are all by nature the children of wrath*) and in opposition to life, it is called death, *Death enters by sin, and death is gone over all men*. . . .³⁵

And it recurs in one of the sermons preached on the Penitential Psalms:

Now physicians say, That man hath in his constitution, in his complexion a natural virtue, which they call *Balsamum suum*, His own balsamum, by which any wound which a man could receive in his body would cure itself, if it could be kept clean from the annoyances of the air, and all extrinsic incumbrances. Something that hath some proportion and analogy to this balsamum of the body, there is in the soul of man too: the soul hath *nardum*

³⁴ Gosse, *op. cit.*, pp. 174-175.

³⁵ Alford, *The Works of John Donne*. London: John W. Parker, West Strand, 1839, Vol. II, pp. 3-4.

suum, her spikenard, as the spouse says, *Nardus mea dedit odorem suum*, She had a spikenard, a perfume, a fragrancy, a sweet savour in herself.³⁶

Having this omnipresent interest in medicine and medical science Donne would have been an anomaly in his time had he not likewise exhibited more than a passing curiosity in alchemy, the chemistry of the age. Many passages in his poetry are lighted up by figures drawn from this science, the most famous of which, probably, is that in *Loves Alchymie*:

And as no chymique yet th' Elixar got,
But glorifies his pregnant pot,
If by the way to him befall
Some odoriferous thing, or medicinall.

Likewise in *Elegie VIII*:

Then like the Chymicks masculine equall fire,
Which in the Lymbecks warme wombe doth inspire
Into th' earths worthlesse durt a soule of gold.

Even more interesting because it antedates, by nearly three-quarters of a century, the *Annus Mirabilis* of Dryden, which was so caustically criticized at the time of its publication and subsequently for its bold introduction of the language and occupation of the artisan and mechanic into the realm of poetry, is the opening of this same *Elegie VIII*:

As the sweet sweat of Roses in a Still
As that which from chaf'd muskats pores doth trill,
As the Almighty Balme of th' early East,
Such are the sweat drops of my Mistris breast,
And on her (brow) her skin such lustre sets,
They seeme no sweat drops, but pearle coronets.
Ranke sweaty froth thy Mistresse's brow defiles,
Like spermatique issue of ripe menstruous boiles,
Or like the skumme, which by needs lawlesse law
Enforc'd, Sanferra's starved men did draw
From parboild shooes, and bootes, and all the rest
Which were with any soveraigne fatness blest,
And like vile lying stones in saffron'd tinne,
Or warts, or wheales, they hang upon her skinne.

It is evident that the prosaic realism of Dryden may have owed much to the earlier and earthier realism of Donne.

These numerous passages cited from both his poetry and his prose indicate clearly the open-mindedness with which Donne received the

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 406.

contributions of the new science and mingled them, yet with no feeling of contradiction or of intellectual confusion, with the heritage of earlier centuries. Still I cannot forbear quoting here a few lines from one of the sermons which reveals how truly mediaeval Donne's science could, on occasion, be:

When our Saviour forbids us to cast pearl before swine, we understand ordinarily in that place, that by pearl are understood the Scriptures, and when we consider the natural generation and production of pearl, that they grow bigger and bigger, by a continual succession, and devolution of dew, and other glutinous moisture that falls upon them, and there condenses and hardens, so that a pearl is but a body of many shells, many crusts, many films, many coats enwrapped upon one another.³⁷

No, Donne was not fretted by any apparent disintegration of the physical universe in which he lived. The mediaeval world was in process of dissolution during Donne's time, but the dissolution was a far more subtle process than the one which Courthope describes. Modern as he was in many ways, Donne was thoroughly and unshakeably mediaeval in his cosmology, of which the following passage from a sermon already alluded to, that preached on the occasion of the funeral of Sir William Cokayne, may well serve as an epitome:

I need not call in new philosophy, that denies a settledness, an acquiescence in the very body of the earth, but makes the earth to move in that place, where we thought the sun had moved; I need not that help, that the earth itself is in motion, to prove this, that nothing upon earth is permanent; the assertion will stand of itself, till some man assign me some instance, something that a man may rely upon, and find permanent. Consider the greatest bodies upon earth, the monarchies; objects, which one would think, destiny might stand and stare at, but not shake; consider the smallest bodies upon earth, the hairs of our head, objects, which one would think, destiny would not observe, or could not discern; and yet, destiny, (to speak to a natural man) and God, (to speak to a Christian) is no more troubled to make a monarchy ruinous, than to make a hair gray. Nay, nothing needs to be done to either, by God, or destiny; a monarchy will ruin, as a hair will grow gray, of itself. In the elements themselves, of which all sub-elementary things are composed, there is no acquiescence, but a vicissitudinary transmutation into one another; air condensed becomes water, a more solid body, and air rarefied becomes fire, a body more disputable, and inapparent.³⁸

Here, it would seem sufficiently evident, despite Bredvold,³⁹ that the question of a geocentric or a heliocentric universe pales into nothing-

³⁷ *Ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 191.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, Vol. III, pp. 483-484.

³⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. 203.

ness before that profoundest of mediaeval truths, "The earth hath bubbles, as the water has,"—and men "are of them." For however widely he diverged from the traditional in his views on the more pertinent spiritual and intellectual problems of his day, Donne's attitude toward physical science is, as Miss Ramsay rightly says, ". . . presque invariablement celle du métaphysicien, et du métaphysicien médiéval."⁴⁰

⁴⁰ It is interesting to conjecture what Donne's relations with the so-called School of Night were. Giordano Bruno had been in England from 1583 to 1586 and the "School" which was inspired by his visit included, besides Sir Walter Raleigh, its moving spirit, two men with whom Donne was closely connected. One was the astronomer, Hariot. The other was Donne's friend, the Earl of Northumberland. It was the latter, it will be remembered, who had undertaken the delicate task of breaking the news of Donne's marriage to Anne More's father. Despite this linking of Donne with members of the "School" group there is to my knowledge no direct reflection of its views in his thought. An informative chapter on the "School" appears in Frances A. Yates's *A Study of Love's Labour's Lost*. Cambridge: At The University Press, 1936.

CHAPTER III

MEDIAEVAL SYNTHESIS AND RENAISSANCE DICHOTOMY

IF IT IS a critical fallacy to find in Donne a confusion of mind resulting from the supposed recoil of mediaeval philosophic thought before the advance of the new learning, particularly before the impact of the new astronomy of Copernicus, Kepler, and Galileo, there remains to be considered a problem far more pertinent to Donne as a Renaissance artist—the problem growing out of the clash between the mediaeval aesthetic and the rejection of that aesthetic by the new age.

The mystical aesthetic which the Middle Ages inherited from a long line of Christian thinkers, beginning with St. Augustine and including among other luminaries Bernard of Clairvaux, Hugo of St. Victor, and, of course, St. Thomas himself, had been given its supreme poetic manifestation by Dante almost three hundred years before Donne was born. But it did not disappear with Dante, although it was never again to find so eloquent an advocate; rather, it continued to attract devotees during the last of the mediaeval centuries, as indeed it has since. For this aesthetic could not become an entirely negligible thing so long as the mediaeval metaphysic continued to link the seen and the unseen worlds. The one found its *rationale* in the other. But there came a time when an alien spirit was introduced into the mediaeval scene, a spirit with which the unity of the mediaeval vision was not reconcilable. Among the effects which that "vast perturbation" called the Renaissance had upon the western world not the least significant was its severance of the union which the scholastics had predicated between the world of flesh and the world of spirit. The results of that severance were deep and lasting, and they are particularly evident in Donne. To see them in their full significance it will be profitable, I think, to review in some detail the relevant principles of mediaeval thought and the specific nature of the Renaissance reaction.

Ruskin, who has, perhaps, done more than any other single individual to interpret to the modern mind the spirit of the mediaeval arts, insisted that the end of those arts came with the rise of the spirit of negation which, startlingly enough, revealed itself first in one of the most Christian of painters.

You remember, doubtless, what high ground we have for placing the beginning of human intellectual strength at about the age of twelve years. Assume, therefore, this period for the beginning of Raphael's strength. He died at thirty-seven. And in his twenty-fifth year, one half-year only past the precise centre of his available life, he was sent for to Rome, to decorate the Vatican for Pope Julius II, and having until that time worked exclusively in the ancient and stern mediaeval manner, he, in the first chamber which he decorated in that palace, wrote upon its walls the *Mene, Tekel, Upharsin*, of the Arts of Christianity.

And he wrote it thus: On one wall of that chamber he placed a picture of the World or Kingdom of *Theology*, presided over by *Christ*. And on the side wall of that same chamber he placed the World or Kingdom of *Poetry*, presided over by *Apollo*. And from that spot, and from that hour, the intellect and the art of Italy date their degradation.

Observe, however, the significance of this fact is not in the mere use of the figure of the heathen god to indicate the domain of poetry. Such a symbolical use had been made of the figures of heathen deities in the best times of Christian art. But it is in the fact, that being called to Rome especially to adorn the palace of the so-called head of the church, and called as the chief representative of the Christian artists of his time, Raphael had neither religion nor originality enough to trace the spirit of poetry and the spirit of philosophy to the inspiration of the true God, as well as that of theology; but that, on the contrary, *he elevated the creations of fancy on the one wall, to the same rank as the object of faith upon the other*; that in deliberate, balanced opposition to the Rock of the Mount Zion, he reared the rock of Parnassus, and the rock of the Acropolis; that, among the masters of poetry we find him enthroning Petrarch and Pindar, but not Isaiah nor David, and for lords over the domain of philosophy we find the masters of the school of Athens, but neither of those greater masters by the last of whom that school was rebuked,—those who received their wisdom from heaven itself, in the vision of Gibeon, and the lightning of Damascus.

The doom of the arts of Europe went forth from that chamber, and it was brought about in great part by the very excellencies of the man who had thus marked the commencement of decline.¹

The Ruskinian criticism has been rather systematically discredited in recent years, but the fact remains that the divorce between the arts and theology, between philosophy and faith, which took place in English thought in the seventeenth century, has not been sufficiently understood in modern times.

Whatever else it may be, modern civilization is essentially a protestant, not an affirmative, development. It arises out of the decline and the decay, but even more than this, out of the denial, of much

¹ Ruskin, "Pre-Raphaelitism," *The Works of John Ruskin*. London: George Allen, 156 Charing Cross Road, 1904, Library edition, Vol. XII, pp. 148-150.

that mediaevalism stood for. So completely has this denial been effected that for many moderns most traces of the struggle between the old and the new idealisms have been lost. But to the men of the sixteenth century the struggle was a vital one and the issues closely joined. In that time men chose their positions deliberately, if sometimes regretfully, and the decisions which they made have colored the lives of all the generations which have come after them.

It is not easy for the modern mind to comprehend the mediaeval ideal to which the men of the Renaissance said an eternal farewell. As Henry Adams has so deftly put it:

True ignorance approaches the infinite more nearly than any amount of knowledge can do, and, in our case, ignorance is fortified by a certain element of nineteenth century indifference which refuses to be interested in what it cannot understand; a violent reaction from the thirteenth century which cared little to comprehend anything except the incomprehensible.²

For almost four hundred years the western world has looked upon the Renaissance as an unmixed blessing. That this could never have been had not history been read through prejudiced and preoccupied eyes, few serious-thinking persons will now deny. To say, as in effect certain historians have been accustomed to say (and as Courthope tacitly assumes) that the Renaissance was an awakening from ten centuries of mediaeval barbarism is too summary a dismissal of an era that could produce a *Rheims* and a *Summa Theologica*, a *Dies Irae* and a *Divina Commedia*.

The fundamental note of the Middle Ages was unity—unity of religious faith, unity of intellectual objective, unity of artistic endeavor. At the close of the first World War in 1918, Ralph Adams Cram wrote:

You may know a crescent epoch from one that is decadent by this test at least if its tendency is centripetal, rather than centrifugal; if scattered unities are being gathered up into greater wholes instead of the reverse process, then greater fortune lies beyond and the coming years have much to give. If, on the other hand, things once united and consistent are resolving themselves into their component parts; if a Church is distintegrating into sects, a philosophy into personal followings, society into classes and sub-classes, each fashioning for itself its own aggressive propaganda and its scheme of offence and defence; if literature and the arts are ceasing to be a great popular voicing and are becoming the personal idiosyncrasies of over-differentiated egoists; and if, finally, the human personality itself is breaking

² *Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres*. Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1927, pp. 111-112.

up into its component parts so that each man lives, not a dual, but even a multiple life (his religion, business, philosophy, politics, domestic life all separated by inviolable frontiers) then you may know that an epoch is drawing to its close, and if you are wise, you will look all around for signs of the new day, the grey dawn of which must be visible along the hills.³

The times in which we live have pretty well lost both taste and inclination for the centripetal—so much so that instinctively we are apt to confuse order with tyranny and identify anarchy with freedom. In the words of a distinguished contemporary critic:

The Western mind has turned away from the contemplation of the absolute and eternal to the knowledge of the particular and the contingent. It has made man the measure of all things and has sought to emancipate human life from its dependence on the supernatural. Instead of the whole intellectual and social order being subordinated to spiritual principles, every activity has declared its independence, and we see politics, economics, science and art organizing themselves as autonomous kingdoms which owe no allegiance to any higher power.⁴

It was not thus during the high tide of Mediaevalism. No more eloquent tribute has been paid to the many-sided charm of the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries—the centuries when the mediaeval ideals attained their fullest flower—than the wistful, if sometimes cynical, volume of the scholarly New England Puritan already alluded to. Obviously, it was with a sense of relief from the vertiginous atmosphere of his own day that Adams wrote:

The nineteenth century moved fast and furious, so that one who moved in it felt sometimes giddy, watching it spin; but the eleventh moved faster and more furiously still. The Norman conquest of England was an immense effort, and its consequences were far reaching, but the first crusade was altogether the most interesting event in European history. Never has the Western world shown anything like the energy and unity with which she then flung herself on the East, and for the moment made the East recoil. Barring her family quarrels, Europe was a unity then, in thought, will, and object. Christianity was the unit. Mont-Saint-Michel and Byzantium were near each other. The Emperor Constantine and the Emperor Charlemagne were figured as allies and friends in the popular legend. The East was the common enemy, always superior in wealth and numbers, frequently in energy, and sometimes in thought and art. The outburst of the first crusade was splendid even in a military sense, but it was great beyond comparison in its reflection in architecture, ornament, poetry, colour, religion, and philosophy. Its men were astonishing, and its women were worth all the rest.⁵

³ *The Great Thousand Years*. Boston: Marshall Jones Company, 1918, pp. 32-33.

⁴ Christopher Dawson, "Christianity and the New Age," *Essays in Order*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1931, p. 205.

⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. 32.

The basis of the mediaeval unity was, as Adams rightly says, Christianity; and the strength of Mediaevalism lay in that unity. What is no less true, although too often either openly denied, or covertly passed by, is the fact that the source of modernism lies in the mediaeval. John Donne, if there is any verity in my evaluation of his historic significance, is, chronologically, the first of modern English poets. Yet the drama of his life, the arresting fire of much of his verse, derive from a clash between the mediaeval and the modern. To fail to sense this is to miss the inter-play of epochs, to perform a feat of chronological surgery which would remove the Middle Ages from the living body of the history of Donne's time.

The Middle Ages themselves were too wise to attempt such a denial of the continuity of western culture. The Roman Catholic Church, which was the great effective instrument of occidental civilization, did not deny Aristotle, but incorporated him into the *Summa* of St. Thomas; she did not deny Cicero, rather she set the Church Fathers to learn from him the secrets of forensic eloquence; she did not outlaw the charm of the plastic arts, but set them to the edification of the masses by giving them as subjects her saints and martyrs.

But while the thought and the rhetoric of the dying Classical world were easily assimilated by the young Christian civilization, the plastic arts and poetry presented an infinitely more difficult problem. Whereas the thinker works through the medium of ideas, the artist begins with the material world. The greatest artists, indeed, have never been satisfied to rest with the creature, animate or inanimate, in which their senses discerned the ageless thing which men call Beauty, but have sought to find in the physical the visible embodiment of the metaphysical idea. Thus, ideally, the artist becomes a mediator between two worlds, between the world of things and the world of ideas; in the language of Aristotelian philosophy, between matter⁶ and form; or in the language of Christian theology, between flesh and spirit, between soul and body. By the majority of the historians of Mediaevalism one is left with the impression that the mediaeval Church rejected the possibility of a reconciliation between the claims of these two rival worlds; that it posed an impossible supernatural objective, the inevitable result of which was a slinking and skulking compromise with the natural. Or to put the

⁶ This by way of analogue only; for Aristotelian prime matter, of course, does not exist apart from form.

most obvious aspect of the enigma, the *Epistle to the Ephesians* and the sacramental character of matrimony to the contrary notwithstanding, the inference is often given that the universal ideal of the Western Church was virginity and that marriage was of itself a making of terms with the Devil.

Almost universally this misunderstanding of the mediaeval synthesis of the supernatural and the natural rests upon a misunderstanding of St. Paul and St. Augustine—upon a reading of the *Epistle to the Galatians* without reference to the *Epistle to the Ephesians*, and a reading of the *Confessions* without reference to the *City of God*—and of the two, St. Augustine has probably been cited more often to stigmatize the position of the mediaeval church. As a matter of fact a careful reading of the *Confessions* alone will reveal that even in that work in which he mourns the frailties of his youth and young manhood, the great African doctor insists that the way of perfection is a steady progress from the creature to the creator, from the natural to the supernatural:

Thy whole creation never ceaseth, nor is ever silent in thy praises: every spirit praiseth thee by the mouth converted to thee, and all living creatures and corporeal things by the mouth of such as contemplate thy wisdom in them; that this soul of ours may ascend from its weariness towards thee, by the steps of the things thou hast made, and may pass on to thee who hast wonderfully made them, and there is its refection and true strength.⁷

In a later chapter of the same work he writes:

For seeking whence it was that I approved of the beauty of bodies whether heavenly or earthly; and what was present to my mind, when I made a right judgment concerning changeable things, and said, *this ought to be so, and that should not be so*: seeking, I say, from what it was that I made this judgment, when I so judged, I had found that there was above my changeable mind the unchangeable and true eternity of truth. And I ascended, as it were, by steps from bodies to the soul. . . . Then it was that I discerned in my understanding *thy invisible things understood by the things which are made*.⁸

But unequivocally in the *City of God*, he who had once been attracted by the teachings of the Manichaeans, denies the import of the Manichaean attitude toward the body:

But if any one says that the flesh is the cause of all vices and ill conduct, inasmuch as the soul lives wickedly only because it is moved by the flesh, it is certain he has not carefully considered the whole nature of man. For

⁷ *Confessions*. New York: D. & J. Sadlier & Co., 1890, Book V, Ch. 1.

⁸ *Ibid.*, Book VII, Ch. 17. Par. 2.

"the corruptible body, indeed, weigheth down the soul." Whence, too, the apostle, speaking of this corruptible body, of which he had shortly before said, "though our outward man perish," says, "We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: if so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up in life." We are then burdened with this corruptible body; but knowing that the cause of this burdensomeness is not the nature and substance of the body, but its corruption, we do not desire to be deprived of the body, but to be clothed with its immortality. For then, also, there will be a body, but it shall no longer be a burden, being no longer corruptible. At present, then, "the corruptible body presseth down the soul, and the earthly tabernacle weigheth down the mind that museth upon many things," nevertheless they are in error who suppose that all the evils of the soul proceed from the body.

Virgil, indeed, seems to express the sentiments of Plato in the beautiful lines, where he says,—

A fiery strength inspires their lives,
An essence that from heaven derives,
Though clogged in part by limbs of clay,
And the dull "vesture of decay";

but though he goes on to mention the four most common mental emotions, —desire, fear, joy, sorrow,—with the intention of showing that the body is the origin of all sins and vices, saying,—

Hence wild desires and grovelling fears,
And human laughter, human tears,
Immured in dungeon-seeming night,
They look abroad, yet see no light,

yet we believe quite otherwise. For the corruption of the body, which weighs down the soul, is not the cause but the punishment of the first sin; and it was not the corruptible flesh that made the soul sinful, but the sinful soul that made the flesh corruptible.⁹

Still, fundamental error though it be to think of mediaeval Christianity as a defeatist creed rejecting as tainted the physical basis of life itself, there is some reason for the prevalent misconception of its attitude and purpose. Confronted by a decadent world in which scarce a semblance of the old pagan ethical values survived, faced with the task of converting an enervated and degraded populace to its own bracing and difficult standards, the mediaeval Church girded itself for a supreme effort. Centuries of luxury and the inevi-

⁹ *The City of God*. Tr. by the Rev. Marcus Dods. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1888. Book XIV, Par. 3.

table sapping of physical and spiritual resources which accompanies an over-ripe civilization had brought the Roman empire to the nadir of its fortunes. The gangrene of despair was attacking not only the palsied members of the body politic; what was infinitely worse, it was eating away the basic conception of the desirability of life itself. If there are moments when the cauterizing knife is the symbol of mercy to the individual, there are likewise moments when Spartan measures become the true mercy in the lives of civilizations. But in either case, the application of the extreme remedy is in the interest of life, not in denial of it.

If the asceticism of the monks of the desert appears to us purely negative and hostile to life, we must remember that it was only by a complete break with the old world—going out into the wilderness and making a fresh start—that it was possible to realize the independence and autonomy of Christian ideals. Above all, sex had to be rescued from the decadence of Graeco-Roman society, and this could only be accomplished by a drastic process of discipline and purgation. Catholicism stood for the existence of absolute spiritual values in a disillusioned and hopeless world, and consequently it had to assert these values by the sacrifice of every lesser good, not only the good of marriage, but the good of life itself. The essentially positive character of the Christian ideal could only be completely realised when the struggle with the pagan world was over, and consequently it is in the lives of saints such as Francis of Assisi and Philip Neri rather than St. Anthony or St. Simeon Stylites that we may find the fullest expression of Christian asceticism—an asceticism which is fundamentally humane and friendly to life. It involves an heroic sacrifice of the natural life of sex and of the family to the service of God and the Christian people, but it is in no sense a denial of the values that it had transcended.¹⁰

The leaven of the mediaeval idealism worked slowly but it worked thoroughly, and, after all, five hundred years was not a long time in which to regenerate the effeminate remnants of the peoples of the empire and to refine and curb the violence of successive waves of barbarian invaders. Finally, according to the promise of the fitful gleams of the first renaissance of Alcuin and John Scotus Erigena, the second renaissance burst into flower. Of it the eleventh century is the springtime, the twelfth, the summer, and the thirteenth, the glorious and fruitful autumn. No more diversified era has yet been born. And yet the Gothic cathedrals, the scholastic philosophy, the poetry of courtly love and the chivalric romances, supreme achievements that they are, are but facets of its central unity:

¹⁰ Christopher Dawson, "Christianity and Sex," *Enquiries into Religion and Culture*. New York: Sheed & Ward, 1937, pp. 288–289.

... that which makes Chartres Cathedral and its glass, the sculptures of Rheims, the *Dies Irae*, *Aucassin and Nicolette*, the Song of Roland, the Arthurian Legends, great art and unique is neither their technical mastery, nor their fidelity to the enduring laws of all great art,—though these are singular in their perfection,—but rather the peculiar spiritual impulse which informed the time, and by its intensity, its penetrating power, and its dynamic force wrought a rounded and complete civilization and manifested this through a thousand varied channels.¹¹

It was not an accident that the Gothic achievement of the great mediaeval centuries deserves to rank both in architecture and sculpture with the work of the best age of Greece. The Church and the Universe were, indeed, taken for truths then, just as the Olympian deities and the vales of Thessaly were taken for truths in the great day of Athens. Strange, even contradictory, though it may seem to the inheritors of the Goethe-Burckhardt-Nietzsche-Symonds characterization of the Middle Ages, there was much in common between the two epochs. Each possessed a profound spiritual poise the like of which has been unknown to any other eras. For each the great and abiding questions of human life and human conduct had been satisfactorily answered, with the result that men were left free to concentrate the whole of their energies upon the vexing problems of politics, economics, philosophy, and the arts, without the appalling fear which haunts the modern man lest the answers prove false, or what is worse, both questions and answers, perhaps even life itself, reveal themselves as vain figments of a tortured imagination. "Hélas non!" said Flaubert, "je ne suis pas un homme antique; les hommes antiques n'avaient pas de maladies de nerfs comme moi." And like those of the Greeks, the nerves of the men of the Middle Ages were eminently healthy. "Life had miseries enough, but few shadows deeper than those of the imaginative lover, or the terrors of ghosts at night. Men's imaginations ran riot, but did not keep them awake; ..."

But the most striking similarity between the Greek and the Mediaevalist was this—that each, out of the essential soundness of his heart, had set a Queen to rule over him. There is a vast difference between the Athena of the Parthenon and Mary of Chartres and Notre Dame, but each alike was a penetrating and permeating influence upon the time which is peculiarly hers. Ruskin has written of Athena in the Heavens, Athena in the Earth, and Athena in the

¹¹ Ralph A. Cram, in introduction to *Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres*, pp. vi-vii.

Heart, to indicate the extent of Pallas's domain in the land by the Aegean, but the realm of Mary was, if not more extensive, at least more intensely hers. Rank meant nothing to her in the belief of the faithful. Her intercession was as confidently sought by a Gurth as by a St. Louis. Because of this universal attachment, it is not surprising that a thousand shrines sprang up in her honor, from the humblest village church to the most magnificent cathedral.

Manifold were the lights which Mary shed upon the Middle Ages. She was the Virgin, but she was also the Mother of her Divine Son. She was a Queen of indescribable majesty, but she was also a poor Jewish maiden to whom the humblest menial tasks were a daily portion. She was the model of the cloister, but what is all but lost sight of in modern times, she was equally the model of the Christian household. Before her majesty the haughtiest king bowed with no sense of incongruity; in her simplicity the most ignorant scullionmaid felt a comforting fellowship. And always and unforgettably she was Mary Immaculata, alone of all the human race preserved from the first moment of her existence from the soul-leprosy of sin. Among all the gifts which the Middle Ages delighted to shower upon her, there was one which she treasured most, and without which all others were unworthy and unacceptable—the purity and innocence of the giver's heart.

Next to the Blessed Virgin herself as an exponent of the mediaeval confidence in the meaningfulness of existence was Thomas Aquinas. The twentieth century has witnessed a remarkable rebirth of interest in St. Thomas. Whereas a quarter of a century ago, in the English-speaking world, chairs of scholastic philosophy were unheard of outside the Roman Catholic foundations, they have now become fairly common, and the head of one great university has even launched from the ramparts of the Thomistic system a single-handed effort to renovate the American educational system. Nevertheless, it is unlikely that the present will recover much of the spirit which animated the work of the Angelic Doctor. The civilization which was built on his thought was wrecked by the stupidity and arrogance of those who loved it, and by the stupidity and violence of those who hated it; and the thoroughness with which, between them, they wrought the work of destruction has left the Thomistic civilization but an historic memory to be revered or condemned according to one's point of view.

To attempt to evaluate the contribution of the great Dominican to

the development of philosophic thought lies beyond both the scope of a work of literary criticism and the capacities of the writer. But to point out in a restricted way what St. Thomas meant to his age and to his epoch and what the effect of his final rejection has had upon modern letters is, let us hope, permissible.

St. Thomas, unfortunately, is deprived of a hearing before most moderns because he is confusedly connected with syllogisms and sanctity, either of which alone would be enough to make him unpopular. As a matter of fact both logic and holiness assume a very real charm in his person. Indeed, if Francis of Assisi is the supreme mediaeval representative and exponent of an unreasoning and unreasonable faith in the joy of living and the glory of creation, Thomas Aquinas is the interpreter of the Reason which lies behind that unreasonableness. In any event he is as fervent—I had almost said fanatical—an advocate of the splendor of existence. Himself of noble blood—he was related to Frederick II—he turned his back on the glitter of public life, choosing to search in cloistral seclusion for an unchanging meaning in the eternal variety of life.

And the solution of St. Thomas to the enigma of life, once he had pronounced it, was, after all, inevitable:

. . . pulchrum et bonum in subjecto quidem sunt idem, quia super eandem rem fundantur, scilicet super formam; et propter hoc bonum laudatur ut pulchrum; set ratione differunt; nam bonum proprie respicit appetitum; est enim bonum, quod omnia appetunt; et ideo habet rationem finis, nam appetitus est quasi quidam motus ad rem. Pulchrum autem respicit vim cognoscitivam: pulchra enim dicuntur, quae visa placent . . .¹²

“Pulchrum et bonum in subjecto quidem sunt idem”—here in simple and unequivocal words is revealed the heart of the mediaeval aesthetic—here is the justification by Albert’s favorite pupil of the instinctive hunger of man for the beauty of the universe. There is no hint of a feverish and fretful manichaeism, no suspicion that what God and man looked upon was not good. Wholesomeness and wholeness, these were the special attributes of St. Thomas’ teaching. He was rightly the Universal Doctor. Had he been less he would not have been adequate for the times. For he was called to heave into place the keystone of the mediaeval synthesis. God and Man, Soul and Body, Matter and Form, Flesh and Spirit, the eternal and unchanging relation of these, each to the other, must be finally and definitively stated. It will not be deprecatory to St.

¹² *Summa Theologica*, Pars. I, qu. V, art. IV.

Thomas to say that many of the materials for his synthesis had been made ready for his hand. After all the mediaeval summer was turning into a golden autumn when he appeared. But the hand and the head of the master were yet needed to shape many partial methods into one great method, to solve the mysterious relationship of the many and the One.

In the truest sense St. Thomas came to complete the work of St. Augustine. The task of Augustine was to stress the importance of the spiritual factor in the equation of the universe at a time when that factor was undervalued. It was inevitable that in the course of time the emphasis must be shifted from the component factors to the equation itself; as Chesterton puts it there was a danger "in the very traditionalism of the Augustinians. For the Augustinians derived only from Augustine; and Augustine derived partly from Plato, and Plato was right, but not quite right."¹³ When Aquinas came upon the scene the foulness of the imperial decadence lay far behind and the new blood of the Gael and the Goth had given physical tone and spiritual assurance to the western world. The new civilization was a fact and the philosopher appeared to bind the forces of that civilization's rising tide in equilibrium.

Optimism (though the word has been rather hopelessly vulgarized by the nineteenth century) was the touchstone of St. Thomas' philosophy.

He did, with a most solid and colossal conviction believe in Life; and in something like what Stevenson called the great theorem of the liveableness of life. It breathes somehow in his very first phrase about the reality of Being. If the morbid Renaissance intellectual is supposed to say, "To be or not to be—that is the question," then the massive mediaeval doctor does most certainly reply in a voice of thunder, "To be—that is the answer."

The point is important; many not unnaturally talk of the Renaissance as the time when certain men began to believe in Life. The truth is that it was the time when a few men, for the first time, began to disbelieve in Life. The Mediaevals had put many restrictions, and some excessive restrictions, upon the universal human hunger and even fury for Life. Those restrictions had often been expressed in fanatical and rabid terms; the terms of those resisting a great natural force; the force of men who desired to live. Never until the modern thought began, did they really have to fight with men who desired to die. That horror had threatened them in Asiatic Albigensianism but it had never become normal to them—until now.¹⁴

The great debt which the arts of western civilization owe to St.

¹³ *St. Thomas*, p. 126.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 131-132.

Thomas lies in the fact that when the ascetic impulse was at its strongest he had the characteristic common sense to fight the battle for the senses. Cluny and Clairvaux between them may have created the civilization of the Middle Ages; it was the bulky form of Aquinas which stood between them and the annihilation of that which they had created. He is the great apologist for the body, for matter, for the "pulchrum" which "in subjecto" is identical with the "bonum." Not, it is hardly necessary to add, that he was a "materialist." But with unblinking eyes and untroubled soul he saw that, in the mystery which is creation, flesh cannot be divorced from spirit, matter from form, nor soul from body. At a moment when enthusiasts more impulsive and less wise undoubtedly were inclined to outlaw the body, St. Thomas stood up in ponderous dignity to remind them that God had not done so. Angelic Doctor that he was, the heart of his psychological teaching is that the senses stand as mediators between the soul and the universe, that for all men the supernatural may be reached only through the natural. The dignity which that central idea conferred upon the beauty of creation—that beauty which is to be met in things as diverse as the shadow of a summer cloud and the contour of a human face—is overwhelming.

This beauty—of form, line, color, chiaroscuro, tone, melody, harmony, rhythm—has been desirable in itself, and because of its power of sensuous delight, but even more as a means of expressing symbolically, and therefore sacramentally, those spiritual adventures, experiences, and achievements which transcend the sphere of the physical and the intellectual, and therefore can be expressed only after a symbolical or sacramental fashion.¹⁵

Before entering upon an analysis of this mediaeval aesthetic, of which the soul is, as Cram rightly says, the concept of sacramental idealism, it may be well to recall that twice and twice only in the history of the western world has a consistent attempt been made to solve the most basic of all artistic problems—the problem of the reconciliation of the flesh and the spirit. Once by the Greeks in their great period and once by the mediaevalists seventeen hundred years later a body of theoretic principles was evolved to guide the artist on his perilous quest. As for the Renaissance, such integrity of artistic purpose as it possessed came from its rejection of the mediaeval synthesis, together with its clutching at the husk but vitiating the heart of the Greek ideal.

A common misconception of the Greek attitude toward life is due

¹⁵ Cram, *The Substance of Gothic*. Boston: Marshall Jones Company, 1917, pp. 8-9.

largely to the effort of certain German scholars and poets of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to set up an artificial distinction between the tempers of Christianity and Hellenism, typified by Heinrich Heine's habit of speaking, as Burdach says, "von dem Gegensatz und Wechsel zwischen Schönheitsliebendem Hellenismus, Sinnenfrohem Heidentum einerseits und Asketischem Nazarenismus, Weltfeindlichem Judentum und Christentum anderseits."¹⁶ Hellenism, indeed, has suffered much from its friends and nowhere more fatally than in this regard, for to look upon classical paganism as a serenely effortless and unperturbed enjoyment of the natural life is to misunderstand its true spiritual timbre as completely as to see in mediaeval Christianity one long unrelieved practice of asceticism. As a matter of fact the Greek mind despite its balance and its poise was far from resting in a state of perpetual peace.

Aber auch das allgemeine Bewusstsein der gebildeten Hellenen war keineswegs frei von düsterer Anschauung des Lebens. Mit nichten war die Kultur der Hellenen ein einziger Tempel ewiger Heiterkeit, des ungetrübten Weltgenusses, des gläubigen Schönheitsdienstes. Der Philosoph, den Winkelmann und die ihm folgendem Anhänger eines absoluten idealistischen Klassizismus gewohnt sind als Priester eines enthusiastischen Kultes der sinnlichen Schönheit und der im Menschlichen und in Menschendarstellung wurzelnden Kunst zu betrachten, und den sie so gern als vornehmsten Zeugen für das Dogma des idealen Griechentums aufrufen, Plato, ging ja in seinem Denken durchaus von einer asketischen Weltansicht aus. Bekanntlich hat niemand jemals schärfere und feindseligere Anklagen gegen die bildende Kunst und die Dichtung erhoben als er. Wohl glaubte er an die Schönheit und pries das Sehnen nach der Schönheit. Aber die Schönheit, die er meinte, das war eine gestaltlose, überirdische, göttliche Schönheit. Die menschliche Gestalt, die sinnliche Körperwelt war ihm ein schnödes Gefängnis dem zu entrinnen die sittlich—religiöse Pflicht gebot.¹⁷

Certainly no Mediaeval ascetic ever went so far as Plato in denying the validity of the body:

What again shall we say of the actual acquirement of knowledge?—is the body, if invited to share in the inquiry, a hinderer or a helper? I mean to say, have sight and hearing any truth in them? Are they not as the poets are always telling us, inaccurate witnesses? and yet, even if they are inaccurate and indistinct, what is to be said of the other senses?—for you will allow that they are the best of them?¹⁸

¹⁶ Konrad Burdach, *Reformation, Renaissance, Humanismus*. Berlin: Verlag von Gebrüder Paetel, 1918, p. 133.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 134.

¹⁸ *Phaedo. The Works of Plato* (Jowett's translation). New York: The Dial Press, n.d. Vol. III, p. 195.

Moreover, if there is time and an inclination towards philosophy, yet the body introduces a turmoil and confusion and fear into the course of speculation, and hinders us from seeing the truth; and all experience shows that if we would have pure knowledge of anything we must be quit of the body, and the soul in herself must behold all things in themselves; then, I suppose, that we shall attain that which we desire, and of which we say that we are lovers, and that is wisdom; not while we live, but after death, as the argument shows; for if while in company with the body, the soul can not have pure knowledge one of two things seems to follow—either knowledge is not to be attained at all, or, if at all, after death. For then, and not till then, the soul will be in herself alone and without the body. In this present life, I reckon that we make the nearest approach to knowledge when we have the least possible concern or interest in the body, and are not saturated with the bodily nature, but remain pure until the hour when God himself is pleased to release us.¹⁹

The truth rather is, that the soul which is pure at departing draws after her no bodily taint, having never voluntarily had connection with the body, which she is ever avoiding, herself gathered into herself; . . .²⁰

Had this been Plato's final word on the relation of soul and body, flesh and spirit, it would have been equivalent to a philosophy of artistic nihilism. But Plato's thought, of course, is not complete here. It is in the mouth of the Wise Woman of Mantinea that he places the words which unfold what we may take as his final explanation of the mystery:

For he who has been instructed thus far in the things of love, and who has learned to see the beautiful in due order and succession, when he comes toward the end will suddenly perceive a nature of wondrous beauty—and this, Socrates, is that final cause of all our former toils, which in the first place is everlasting—not growing and decaying, or waxing and waning; in the next place not fair in one point of view and foul in another, or at one time or in one relation or at one place fair, at another time, or in another relation, or at another place foul, as if fair to some and foul to others, or in likeness of a face or hands or any other part of the bodily frame, or in any form of speech or knowledge, nor existing in any other being; as for example, an animal, whether in earth or heaven, but beauty only, absolute, separate, simple and everlasting, which without diminution and without increase, or any change, is imparted to the evergrowing and perishing beauties of all other things. He who is under the influence of true love rising upward from these begins to see that beauty, is not far from the end. *And the true order of going or being led by another to the things of love, is to use the beauties of earth as steps along which he mounts upwards for the sake of that other beauty, going from one to two, and from two to all fair forms, and from fair forms to fair actions,*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 198.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

*and from fair actions to fair notions, until from fair notions he arrives at the notion of absolute beauty, and at last knows what the essence of beauty is.*²¹

This reasoning of Diotima significantly foreshadows not only that of St. Augustine—"And I ascended, as it were, by steps from bodies to the soul. . . . Then it was that I discerned in my understanding *Thy invisible things understood by the things which are made*"²²—but that of St. Thomas and the mediaeval schoolmen as well, for pagan and Christian alike were attempting from the flux of an ever-changing world to bridge the chasm which separates matter and form, created and uncreated, the many and the One.

Nor does Plato, though he devoted himself more formally to the problem than to any other, represent an isolated phenomenon in Greek thought: "die düstere Anschauung des Lebens" had cast its shadow on the hearts of others of the great Hellenic fellowship.

Wem vollends die griechische Tragödie, die Gedankenwelt des Äschylus und Euripides lebendig wird, der kann unmöglich an die alte Legende vom naiven, sonnigen Griechentum glauben.²³

And yet the academic conception of the Greek's graceful and untroubled acceptance of life as an unmixed good, false though it is, has in it more than a grain of truth. A certain ineluctable youthfulness, which is the despair of the modern man, did color his whole attitude toward existence, a youthfulness which was overemphasized by the nineteenth century critics and historians. The freshness and vividness of the Greek outlook, one must feel, was a birthright and not an acquisition. When he ponders the mysteries which confront him—to reverse Goethe's famous dictum on Byron—the Greek grows unpleasantly old; Plato, Aeschylus, even Anacreon,—there is no exception. Only when he accepts without question and enjoys without ratiocination is he truly himself. The cause for this has been well pointed out by Peter Wust:

The ancients during their best periods at any rate—take things so simply, so sanely, and so genuinely, as natural facts, that, as a result, after more than two thousand years, every rhythm of their verse and their prose, and every line in their plastic art, reveal to us—so aged and anxious and mentally fagged—the dew-like freshness of eternal youth.²⁴

And on the same point:

Ancient realism and modern positivist materialism are such poles apart

²¹ *Symposium. The Works of Plato* (Jowett's translation). New York: The Dial Press, n.d. Vol. III, pp. 341-342.

²² *Confessions*, Bk. VII, Ch. 17, Par. 2.

²³ Burdach, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

²⁴ "Crisis in the West," *Essays in Order*, p. 98.

that any attempt at a comparison between the two is bound to appear a systematic profanation of the classical attitude to life.

The decisive factor here is the manner of approaching an object, the purity and innocence of the eye beholding things. And how wonderfully pure and single must the eye of the ancients have been—up to and including the time of their highest intellectual achievement, at any rate—that they saw things so clearly and with the directness born of reverence; a vision of which we are, unfortunately, no longer capable.²⁵

The reason modern man is no longer capable of that old Greek vision is an historical one. He is, whether he likes it or not, the heir of the Christian tradition, which has substituted a supernatural ideal for the natural—though at its best heroic—approach of the Greeks. Hence no matter what defections may be made from Christianity itself, the Christian conception of art, or better a distorted caricature of it, is the only that is now indigenous to western civilization and must prevail until another is actively substituted for it. Mere default will not remove the validity of its principles.

It is important then to ponder the mediaeval solution of art's inescapable enigma. That solution did not take the fatal step, as I have already insisted, of rejecting the flesh, for that would have been fatal not only to the sanity of art, but to the sanity of something in which the Church was far more interested than she was in mere art—life itself. From its beginning in Arianism and Manichaeism down to its appearance in the twelfth century form of Albigensianism, she had set her face steadily against that heresy. Instead of rejecting she sought rather to glorify the body. How could she do other? In the words of Chesterton:

The Body was no longer what it was when Plato and Porphyry and the old mystics had left it for dead. It had hung upon a gibbet. It had risen from a tomb. It was no longer possible for the soul to despise the senses which had been the organs of something that was more than man. Plato might despise the flesh; but God had not despised it.²⁶

The Greeks certainly had glorified the body. It will not be going too far to say of Mediaevalism that it could not have recaptured the old, purely natural reverence of the Hellenes for the flesh even had it so desired. Fortunately, the mediaevalists had no desire to imitate the Greek glory; what they set themselves to do was to transfigure it. And they did this by injecting not the doctrine of sin but the doctrine of grace. To objectors who may say that this is an idle

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 98-99.

²⁶ *St. Thomas*, p. 138.

distinction—that the one involves the other—the answer must be made that the whole force of the distinction lies in the focusing of the emphasis; and what relatively few, even of the defenders of the mediaeval ideal, appreciate is that, in that ideal, grace was the essential thing and sin the accident rather than the reverse. The proof of this assertion lies in the fact that the great quests of the Middle Ages from Dante to Sir Galahad were actuated by grace; Francesca and Launcelot are incidental, and their poignant appeal is to be found in the melancholy circumstance that for them the poisoned wine of life overflowed the goblet of Desire. It was not until the nineteenth century decadence that sin became lovely of itself; not until Swinburne that man could write with even more psychological untruth than artistic artifice of “the lilies and languors of virtue” and “the raptures and roses of vice.”

The mediaeval insistence on what I have chosen to call the doctrine of grace brought with it a more careful weighing of moral values than the Greeks had ever known, with consequences to which, again, Chesterton has alluded.

It is not fanciful to see something of a new spirit even in the spiritual sense in this closer vigilance touching the problems of the weak and wavering human will. It is really . . . a sort of shadow thrown by a mystical and metaphysical cloud upon the classic and flowery fields of pure poesy. The mediaeval world did incessantly talk about true lovers and false lovers, where the classical world would have been content to talk about lovers. And though there are many false lovers in classic fable, it is interesting to note that their falsehood does not really discredit them; and the false lover is the true hero. Theseus is not less the Athenian hero because he deserts Ariadne; nor Aeneas less the pious Aeneas because he deserts Dido. But a new note has crept into laments like that of Anelida and Arcite; a suggestion that the false lover is the false knight, and has broken some bond of chivalry. All this atmosphere heavier with moral responsibility and self-determination was not unconnected with the special social ideals of feudalism; and the notion of a wandering knight still owing dependence on a distant lord. But it was also deeply affected by that religious idea, which denied doom and substituted damnation or salvation determined by the will; the spirit that made Dante acclaim freedom as the first of divine gifts, or made Chaucer contradict Calvin centuries before he was born in the very first words of the Parson's Tale.²⁷

The essential difference between the mediaeval and classical conception of art does indeed lie in the circumstance that for the former the unveiled classical sunlight had been subdued by a “mystical

²⁷ *Chaucer*. London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1932, pp. 145-146.

and metaphysical cloud." Of what Christian theologians would call natural virtue, no race ever had so much as the Greeks at the high tide of their development, the result of which is the much-talked-of classical repose. Sunshine and calm, perfect mastery and perfect ease, these qualities waked to life under every blow of the chisel of a Phidias. Life had been tasted and found good. On the other hand the touchstone of mediaeval art—best seen, perhaps, in the aspiration of the Gothic arch—is an eternal striving, not, as has been so often said, to throw off the trammels of the flesh, but to heave the flesh, with all its earthborn tendencies, upward toward the sky. But observe that in both the classical repose and the mediaeval effort there is essential health.

The scholastic aesthetic, in truth, was founded on, and had to stand or fall with, the sacramental system of the Mediaeval Church. It neither involved itself in a "suicide angéliste, par oubli de la matière" nor did it succumb to the contrary "péché de matérialisme." It sought rather to find in created beauty the outward sign of an inward and indwelling grace. The greatest of living neoscholastics has gone far toward elucidating this point in a recent essay.

Cette divination du spirituel dans le sensible et qui s'exprimera elle-même dans le sensible, c'est bien là ce que nous appelons—Poésie. La métaphysique aussi poursuit le spirituel; mais d'une tout autre manière, et avec un tout autre objet formel. Tandis qu'elle se tient dans la ligne du *savoir*, et de la contemplation de la vérité, la poésie se tient dans la ligne du *faire*, et de la délectation de la beauté: différence capitale, qu'on ne méconnaît pas sans dommage. L'une capte le spirituel dans une idée et par l'intellection la plus abstraite, l'autre l'entrevoit dans la chair et par la pointe même du sens que l'intelligence aiguise; l'une ne jouit de son bien que retirée dans les régions éternelles, l'autre le trouve à tous les carrefours du singulier et du contingent; le plus que réel qu'elles cherchent toutes deux, l'une doit le rejoindre dans la nature des choses, il suffit à l'autre de la toucher dans n'importe quel signe; la métaphysique fait la chasse aux essences et aux définitions, la poésie à toute forme luisant au passage, à tout reflet d'un ordre invisible; celle-ci isole le mystère pour le connaître, celle-là, grâce aux équilibres qu'elle construit, le manie et l'utilise comme une force inconnue.²⁸

Even more significant is Maritain's commentary on the Thomistic definition of beauty—"Pulchrum autem respicit vim cognoscitivam: pulchra enim dicuntur quae visa placent. . ."

Saint Thomas, qui avait autant de simplicité que de sagesse définissait

²⁸ Jacques Maritain, *Frontières de la poésie*. Paris: Louis Rouart et Fils, Editeurs, n.d., pp. 22-23.

le beau ce qui plaît à voir, *id quod visum placet*. Ces quatre mots disent tout ce qu'il faut: une vision, c'est-à-dire une *connaissance intuitive*, et une *joie*. Le beau est ce qui donne la joie, non pas toute joie, mais la joie dans le connaître; non pas la joie propre de l'acte de connaître mais une joie qui surabonde et déborde, de cet acte à cause de l'objet connu. Si une chose exalte et délecte l'âme par là même qu'elle est donnée à son intuition, elle est bonne à appréhender, elle est belle.

La beauté est essentiellement objet d'*intelligence*, car ce qui *connaît* au sens plein du mot, c'est l'intelligence, qui seule est ouverte à l'infinité de l'être. Le lieu naturel de la beauté est le monde intelligible, c'est de là qu'elle descend. Mais elle tombe aussi, d'une certaine manière, sous les prises des sens, dans la mesure où chez l'homme ils servent l'intelligence et peuvent eux-mêmes jouir en connaissant: "c'est parmi tous les sens, à la vue et à l'ouïe seulement que le beau a rapport, parce que ces deux sens sont *maxime cognoscitivi*." La part des sens dans la perception de la beauté est même rendue énorme chez nous, et à peu près indispensable, du fait que notre intelligence n'est pas intuitive comme celle de l'ange; elle voit sans doute, mais à condition d'abstraire et de discourir; seule la connaissance sensitive possède parfaitement chez l'homme l'intuitivité requise à la perception du beau. Ainsi l'homme peut sans doute jouir de la beauté purement intelligible, mais le beau *connaturel* à l'homme c'est celui qui vient délecter l'intelligence par les sens et par leur intuition. Tel est aussi le beau propre de notre art, qui travaille une matière sensible pour faire la joie de l'esprit. Il voudrait croire ainsi que le paradis n'est pas perdu. Il a le goût du paradis terrestre, parce qu'il restitue, pour un instant, la paix et la délectation simultanée de l'intelligence et des sens.²⁹

That inextricable interweaving of flesh and spirit which Maritain points out as ingrained in Thomistic thinking—which is indeed most directly and irrefutably expressed in the fundamental axiom of Thomistic psychology, "*Nihil est in intellectu quod non prius est in sensu*," gives the lie to that superficial criticism which would have the Middle Ages perpetually suspicious of all earthly beauty. There was a sense of course in which the World and the Flesh were looked upon as allies of the Devil, but the Schoolmen remembered too, that there had been a time when "le paradis n'est pas perdu;" when the terrestrial, as well as the celestial, spheres had hymned the glory of the Creator. Two great truths they always insisted upon; first, that not Satan but a beneficent God had made the world; and secondly with that humility which is ever the better part of wisdom, that the limitations of human nature precluded man's attaining the supernatural save by the bridge of the natural. As Patmore has put it:

²⁹ *Art et scolastique*. Paris: Louis Rouart et Fils, Editeurs, troisième édition revue et corrigée, 1925, pp. 35-37.

Rhea, the Earth, was the mother of the Gods, and it is only by the inspired knowledge of our own nature, or earth, which is seen, that we can know anything of the Divine, which is unseen. "The natural first, afterwards the supernatural."³⁰

Their insistence that the senses stood as the interpreters between the intellect and the material world, that natural beauty falls "d'une certaine manière, sous les prises des sens, dans le mesure où chez l'homme ils servent l'intelligence et peuvent eux-mêmes jouir en connaissant," was itself a phase of the great sacramental ideal, of the indissoluble marriage of body and soul, flesh and spirit, whereby "Nature fulfilled by grace is not less natural, but is supernaturally natural."³¹ It remained for Descartes and the seventeenth century Puritans to achieve that divorce which to ancients and Mediaevalists alike was unthinkable.

Intense as was the scholastic insistence on the linking of the material and the spiritual in their conception of beauty, and emphatic as was their declaration of the importance of the intuition of the senses in its enjoyment, there was never a danger of their theory of Beauty degenerating into a mere aesthetic of sense. Says St. Thomas:

"Nam ad pulchritudinem tria requiruntur. Primo quidem integritas, sive perfectio: quae enim diminuta sunt, hoc ipso turpia sunt. Et debita proportio, sive consonantia. Et iterum claritas; unde quae habent colorem nitidum, pulchra esse dicuntur."³²

On which again Maritain's commentary is invaluable:

Si la beauté délecte l'intelligence, c'est qu'elle est essentiellement une certaine excellence ou perfection dans le proportion des choses à l'intelligence. De là les trois conditions que lui assignait saint Thomas: intégrité, parce que l'intelligence aime l'être, proportion, parce que l'intelligence aime l'ordre et aime l'unité, enfin et surtout éclat ou clarté parce que l'intelligence aime la lumière et l'intelligibilité. Un certain resplendissement est en effet d'après tous les anciens le caractère essentiel de la beauté—*claritas est de ratione pulchritudinis, lux pulchrificat, quia sine luce omnia sunt turpia*—mais c'est un resplendissement d'intelligibilité: *splendor veri*, disaient les Platoniciens, *splendor ordinis*, disait saint Augustin, ajoutant que "l'unité est la forme de toute beauté," *splendor formae*, disait saint Thomas dans son langage précis de metaphysicien: car la *forme* c'est-à-dire le principe qui fait la perfection propre de tout ce qui est, qui constitue et achève les choses dans leur essence et dans leur qualités, qui est enfin, si l'on peut

³⁰ "Aurea Dicta," *The Rod, The Root And The Flower*. London: L. Bell and Sons Ltd., 1923. 2nd edition revised, p. 9.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

³² *Summa Theologica*, Pars. I, qu. XXXIX, art. VIII.

ainsi parler, le secret ontologique qu'elles portent en elles, leur être spirituel, leur mystère opérant, est avant tout le principe propre intelligibilité, la *clarté* propre de toute chose. Aussi bien toute forme est-elle un vestige ou un rayon de l'Intelligence créatrice imprimé au cœur de l'être créé. Tout ordre et toute proportion d'autre part est oeuvre d'intelligence. Et ainsi, dire avec les scolastiques que la beauté est *le resplendissement de la forme sur les parties proportionnées de la matière*, c'est dire qu'elle est une fulguration d'intelligence sur une matière intelligiblement disposée. L'intelligence jouit du beau parce qu'en lui elle se retrouve et se reconnaît, et prend contact avec sa propre lumière. Cela est si vrai que ceux-là—tel un François d'Assise—perçoivent et savourent davantage la beauté des choses, qui savent qu'elles sortent d'une intelligence, et qui les rapportent à leur auteur.³³

Needless to say the very elevation of the scholastic ideal placed the artist and the man within the artist under a severe constraint. Here was a conception of a universe in which the shapelessness of the prime matter had been given a perfected nature through the infusion by Divine Agency of the substantial form; a conception in which the bodies of all created things were informed and animated by an enlivening soul, vegetative and sensory in the lower orders but spiritual in man. And always on the splendor which came of the union of these two diverse principles rested the Divine Sanction, for God's was the method of creation. The fragrance of the first rose, the indescribable sense of well-being which floods the earth with the burgeoning of the first boughs in spring, the gaiety of the manorial hall, the magnificence of the nearby cathedral—these truly the mediaeval poet could enjoy and be thankful for with an undivided heart. But there were times when the beauty of the earth and earthly things swam like a great cloud of devil's incense before his senses; when the sweetness that is life and the seductiveness that is woman throbbed mercilessly through his veins. Needless to say the perfection of the ideal was not seldom lost sight of and the supernatural drowned in the overflowing of the natural. The peril of a great fall is the penalty of a high aspiration.

Practice always drops below the ethical standards of a period. The contrast appears in the history of Greece and Rome. Yet in neither Greece nor Rome could there exist the abysses of contradiction which disclose themselves after the conversion of western Europe to the religion of Christ.

And for the following reasons. Greek and Roman standards were finite; they regarded only the mortal happiness of the individual and the terrestrial welfare of the State. To Greek thought the indefinite or limitless was as

³³ *Art et scolastique*, pp. 37-39.

the monstrous and unformed; and therefore abhorrent to the classical ideals of perfection. Again, Greek and Roman standards demanded only what Greek and Roman humanity could fulfill in the mortal life of earth. But the Christian ideal of conduct assumes the universal imperfection and infinite perfectability of man. It has constant regard to immortality, and eternity is needed for its fulfilment.³⁴

Still, whatever the defections from it might have been (and they were both numerous and great) the ideal did exist and it coloured all the ways of mediaeval thinking. How far the human consciousness had come since the old, glad Homeric days, in rejecting that fatalism, which, while it did not deny free-will, could nevertheless find a comforting retreat by shifting the ultimate responsibility for man's actions and errors to the impassive Fates, can perhaps be most graphically realized in the transformation of the Homeric Briseis into the mediaeval Cressida. From Benoit de St. Moire's *Roman de Troie* down through Boccaccio's *II Filostrato* to Chaucer's *Troilus and Creseide* the shadow of the "mystic and metaphysical cloud" is never absent; even the latter's sympathy for the sorely tried heroine does not becloud the fact that she represents a decline from the ideal. As Chesterton puts it:

Briseis is blameless because she is blind. Cressida is even false in order to show that she is free. Because Briseis was beautiful, the dogs tore on the Trojan plain the limbs of mighty chieftains: "Such was the sovereign doom and such the will of Jove." But because Cressida was something more than beautiful, was something of what men have come to call romantic; because she was wilful and mysterious and uncalculable, Diomed is wounded and Troilus is slain; and bards lament, reproaching not Jove but Criseyde. Nobody had ever thought of reproaching Briseis. With this extra-ordinary mediaeval postscript to the Iliad, we come upon an entirely new world of curious and even complicated feeling; produced by the overflowing of mediaeval mysticism into the old jests and tragedies of love and lust.³⁵

The way of the mediaeval artist was hard. Christianity, to be sure, did not make easy the way of the poet. Yet what it sought was not the emasculation of his art but its fullness and richness. Before the order of knighthood could be donned a severe discipline of fasting and penance had to be undergone, but he would be a rash person who would say that this ascetic preparation was intended to, or in practice did, vitiate the young strength of the candidate. So the Christianity of the Middle Ages was quite aware that the devotee

³⁴ Henry Osborn Taylor, *The Mediaeval Mind. A History of the Development of Thought and Emotion in the Middle Ages*. London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1927, 4th edition, Vol. I, pp. 369-370.

³⁵ Chaucer, p. 143.

of beauty went out on a Quest Perilous from the dangers of which the integrity of his heart alone could save him. Hence,

Le christianisme ne facilite pas l'art. Il lui ôte bien des moyens faciles, il barre son cours en bien des endroits, mais c'est pour en hausser le niveau. En même temps qu'il lui crée ces difficultés salutaires, il le surélève par le dedans, il lui fait connaître une beauté cachée qui est plus délicieuse que la lumière, il lui donne ce dont l'artiste a le plus besoin, la simplicité, la paix de la crainte et de la dilection, l'innocence qui rend la matière docile aux hommes et fraternelle.³⁷

Failure to appreciate the significance of the sacramental ideal and the thoroughness with which it had penetrated mediaeval life and thought is fatal to a true insight into the spirit of that age; more than that, it is fatal to the virtue of consistency in the critic. It is this failure which led a man like John Addington Symonds into statements such as the following:

During the interval between the closing of the ancient and the opening of the modern ages, the faith of Christians had attached itself to symbols and material objects little better than fetiches. The host, the relic, the wonder-working shrine, things endowed with a mysterious potency, evoked the yearning and the awe of mediaeval multitudes. To such concrete actualities the worshippers referred their sense of the invisible divinity. . . . At the same time, in apparent contradistinction to this demand for things of sense, as signs of supersensual power, the claims of dogma on the intellect grew more imperious, and mysticism opened for the dreaming soul a realm of spiritual rapture. For the figurative arts there was no true place in either of these regions. Painting and sculpture were alike alien to the grosser superstitions, the scholastic subtleties, and the ecstatic trances of the Middle Ages; nor had they anything in common with the logic of theology. Votaries who kissed a fragment of the cross with passion could have found but little to satisfy their ardor in pictures painted by a man of genius. . . . In architecture alone, the mysticism of the Middle Ages, their vague but potent feelings of infinity, their yearning toward a deity invisible, but localized in holy things and places, found aesthetic outlet.³⁸

Plain thinking might lead one to suspect that the passion for seeking in things of sense the sign of an inward and spiritual grace, far from being antipathetic to the nature of art, is the inspiration of every artist. But Symonds blithely administers the *coup de grâce* to his own theory. "In architecture alone, the mysticism of the Middle Ages . . . found artistic outlet." By which amazing statement supposedly the stained glass of Chartres, the sculptures of Amiens and

³⁷ Maritain, *Art et scolastique*, p. 121.

³⁸ *Renaissance in Italy: The Fine Arts*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1888, pp. 9-11.

Rheims, and the *Dies Irae* and *Pange Lingua* are divorced from the architecture, else the exception makes short shrift of the rule.

Nor is this an isolated example of the confusion into which Symonds was led by the nineteenth century tendency to misprize everything which it could not understand. Of Giotto he wrote:

Nothing, indeed, in the history of Art is more remarkable than the fertility of this originaive genius, no less industrious in labor than fruitful of results for men who followed him.³⁹

It is no exaggeration to say that Giotto and his scholars, within the space of little more than a century, painted out upon the walls of the churches and public palaces of Italy every great conception of the Middle Ages. And this they achieved without aesthetic formalism, energetically, but always reverently, aiming at expressing life and dramatizing Scripture history.⁴⁰

What, therefore, Giotto gave to art was before all things else, vitality. His madonnas are no longer symbols of a certain phase of pious awe, but pictures of maternal love. The Bride of God suckles her divine infant with a smile, watches him playing with a bird, or stretches out her arms to take Him when he turns crying from the hands of the circumcising priest.⁴¹

One wonders how this enthusiastic praise of the great mediaeval Italian is to be reconciled with the dogmatic pronouncement that "painting and sculpture were alike alien to the grosser superstitions, the scholastic subtleties, and the ecstatic trances of the Middle Ages."

In two men, Francis of Assisi and Dante Alighieri, the artistic idealism of the Middle Ages is fully realized. Of the saint there is the less to say for the paradoxical reason that he is the more perfect embodiment of the ideal. Thus Maritain:

L'artiste doit être aussi objectif que le savant, en ce sens qu'il ne doit penser au spectateur que pour lui livrer du beau, ou du *bien fabriqué*, comme le savant ne pense à celui qui l'écoute que pour lui livrer du vrai. Les constructeurs des cathédrales ne se proposaient aucune sorte de thèse. C'étaient, selon le beau mot de Dulac, "des hommes qui ne se savaient pas." Ils ne voulaient ni démontrer les convenances du dogme chrétien, ni suggérer par quelque artifice une *émotion chrétienne*. Ils songeaient même beaucoup moins à faire une oeuvre belle qu'à faire de bon ouvrage. Ils croyaient, et tels qu'ils étaient ils opéraient. Leur oeuvre révélait la vérité de Dieu, mais sans le *faire exprès*, et parce qu'elle ne le faisait pas exprès.⁴²

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 191.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 191-192.

⁴² Maritain, *Art et scolastique*, p. 110. Ruskin in different words expresses the same conviction: "In mediaeval art, thought is the first thing, execution the second; in modern art execution is the first thing, and thought the second. And again, in mediaeval art, truth is first, beauty second; in modern art beauty is first, truth second." *Op. cit.*, p. 150.

But Francis did more than forget his audience; he accomplished that hardest of all tasks for the artist, the forgetfulness of self. Of that quality of unconsciousness of self which Carlyle⁴³ admired so largely, no other man had so much. And as he went about courting "domina nostra paupertas," preaching to his sisters the birds, or hymning his brother the sun, Francis in himself achieved the mediaeval synthesis. In him the centuries-old struggle to effect the reconciliation of flesh and spirit, to find "delight untortured by desire" in the beauty of the created universe was finally won. He was himself the greatest of mediaeval poems. In Taylor's words:

Such an individuality as Francis could exist only at the climax of the Middle Ages, at the period of its fullest strength and greatest distinction, when it had masterfully changed after its own heart whatever it had received from the past, and had made its transformed acquisitions into itself.

Francis is of the grand mediaeval climacteric. The Middle Ages were no longer in a stage of transition from the antique; they had attained; they were themselves. Sides of this distinctive mediaeval development and temper express themselves in Francis—are Francis verily. The spirit of romance is incarnate in him. Roland, Oliver, Charlemagne (he of the *Chansons de geste*), and the knights of the Round Table, are part of Francis;—his first disciples are his paladins. Again, instead of emperor or paladin, he is himself the *jongleur*, the *joculator Dei* (God's minstrel).⁴⁴

But with Dante, because the synthesis was achieved only after a soul-rending struggle, the steps in its attainment are much easier to follow. The only right approach to Dante, the only approach which renders him human and understandable rather than a fierce mediaeval ogre, is, startling though it may sound to unexpectant ears, through the flowery avenues of the *romans d'aventure* and the Arthurian romances of the century preceding his. For the love of Dante for Beatrice which rings the universe with a purifying flame is the child of twelfth-century courtly love.

No single phase of the variegated mediaeval life has been more thoroughly misunderstood by the moderns than has the system of courtly love. Indeed many modern scholars and litterateurs have gauged their comments so as to leave the impression that it was a compromise with the untenable monastic ideals of sexual purity, whereby a lady was left free to solace herself for an unappreciative husband with a dashing and attractive lover. The only conditions to this happy escape from unhappy conjugal ties, such commenta-

⁴³ Cf. "Characteristics."

⁴⁴ Henry Osborn Taylor, *The Mediaeval Mind*, Vol. I, p. 434.

tors would have one believe, lay in the meticulous observance of the rules of the game. Unfortunately, as is so often the case with attempts to analyze a distant and strange social culture, this is confusing the system itself with the unhappy lapses and degeneracies which insinuate themselves into the system. Even taken at their worst, however, the morals of the elegant courts of Eleanor of Guienne and Marie of Champagne would compare rather favorably with those of any center of highly cultivated and luxuriant life in later times—say the life of the French court of the seventeenth century, or the English courts of the third George, or even of Victoria herself. Nor need one accept Burke's ethical judgment on the purifying effect of refinement to feel that on this point the advantage is all with the twelfth century. At the root of the abuse even of courtly love lay a courtly ideal:

Eleanor and her daughter Mary and her granddaughter Blanche knew as well as St. Bernard did, or St. Francis, what a brute the emancipated man could be; and as though they foresaw the society of the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, they used every terror they could invent, as well as every tenderness they could invoke, to tame the beasts around them. Their charge was of manners, and to teach manners they made a school which they called their court of Love, with a code of law to which they gave their name of "courteous love."⁴⁵

Love was no condemned thing in that great-hearted century. But neither was it mere lust. It was a tremendous force, a surging flame, which under the guidance of the great ladies of the time burned away the coarseness and savagery of the man. Sometimes—too often if one is of a severe cast of mind—love became a thing of guilt, as in Chretien de Troyes' greatest romance. Still, with all the tangle of false faith which the theme involves he must be an obtuse judge who sees in the tale of Launcelot mere sordid sensuality. The story is one of great souls caught in a great passion and the poet is only recording the melancholy fact that, humanity being what it is, the lives of the finest and fairest are too often strewn with falsehood and untruth and the tatters of ruined honor. To say that the twelfth-century poet, in coming to grips with the matter of the Celtic romance, succeeded rather better in civilizing than in baptizing it, is not to offer an excuse for but an explanation of Chretien's morality. Unfortunately, a sinless literature is impossible in a sinful world.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Adams, *op. cit.*, p. 213.

⁴⁶ "Man's work will savor of man; in his elements and powers excellent and admirable, but

Nevertheless, if one is to do justice to Chretien and to the complexity of his times it must be remembered that his *Launcelot* stands midway between his *Tristan* and his *Perceval*, a chronological development as startling in literature as the fact that in real life Eleanor of Guienne was not only the mother of Mary of Champagne but the great-grandmother of St. Louis.

Of the *romans d'aventure*, *Aucassin et Nicolette* is probably the most widely known. Like all, or nearly all, the *romans* it is largely free from grossness, so that the atmosphere of eternal Maytime pervades the whole realm of Beaucaire. That moral nicety could, of course, be due to one phenomenon only—the cult of the feminine; it is the grace and beauty of Nicolette which nerves the arm of Aucassin, but it is the centuries-old tradition of Christian reverence for all womankind, at whose head stood the Virgin, which made him a gentleman. It is this complete and unquestioning idealization of woman which is responsible for the wild and seemingly blasphemous outburst of Aucassin which many readers have felt to be a blemish in the tale. The famous passage is the reply of Aucassin to the Viscount, who is urging him to forget Nicolette, and admonishing him of the peril to his soul if he does not.

In Paradise what have I to do? I care not to enter, but only to have Nicolette, my very sweet friend, whom I love so dearly well. For into Paradise go none but such people as I will tell you of. There go those aged priests, and those old cripples, and the maimed, who all day long and all night cough before the altars, and in the crypts beneath the churches; those who go in worn old mantles and old tattered habits; who are naked and barefoot, and full of sores; who are dying of hunger and of thirst, of cold and of wretchedness. Such as these enter in Paradise, and with them have I naught to do. But in Hell will I go. For to Hell go the fair clerks and the fair knights who are slain in the tourney and the great wars, and the stout archers and the loyal men. With them will I go. And there go the fair and courteous ladies, who have friends two or three, together with their wedded lords. And there pass the gold and the silver, the ermine and all rich furs, harpers and minstrels, and the happy world. With these will I go, so only that I have Nicolette, my very sweet friend, by my side.⁴⁷

prone to disorder and excess, to error and to sin. Such too will be his literature; it will have the beauty and the fierceness, the sweetness and the rankness, of the natural man, and, with all its richness and greatness, will necessarily offend the senses of those who, in the Apostle's words, are really 'exercised to discern between good and evil.'" John Henry Newman, *The Idea of a University*. London, New York, and Bombay: Longmans, Green and Co., 1896, pp. 316–317.

⁴⁷ *Aucassin and Nicolette*. London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co. Everyman ed., p. 6.

There are two ways of interpreting this speech. The first and the commoner way is to accept it literally as an outcropping of suppressed mediaeval religious scepticism, which would be convincing did it not waive the fact that one is dealing here with a very sophisticated literary artist and that the words are very much in character for Aucassin at the moment. The second and certainly saner approach is to consider it, as the author himself must have, a piece of incoherence to which young lovers are peculiarly susceptible but which reveals all that a lover's hyperbole can be expected to reveal, namely, that he is in love. One may, and undoubtedly a great many people did, even when the tale was new, object to the extravagance of Aucassin's protestation; one cannot for a moment doubt the genuineness of his emotion.

Finally, in the *Vita Nuova* and the *Divine Comedy*, the artistic idealism based upon the sacramental ideal was most completely objectified. Inevitably, too, for the greatest poet of the mediaeval tradition the love of woman was the pathway which led to the reconciliation of the flesh and the spirit, the natural and the supernatural. The Beatrice who leads her abashed votary from the Earthly Paradise upward through the nine heavens to the Empyrean had been foreshadowed in these earlier lines:

Perchè il piacere della sua beltate
Partendo sè dalla nostra veduta,
Divenne spirital bellezza grande,
Che per lo cielo spande
Luce d'amor, che gli angeli saluta,
E lo intelletto loro alto e sottile
Face maravigliar; tanto è gentile!⁴⁸

And he who had written (if, indeed, he did write them) the Bicci sonnets to Forese Donati, and who was later to be reproached because his lady through "increase of beauty and of virtue" was less dear to him, had long before his great vision caught a glimpse of the spiritualizing power of spotless womanhood.

Madonna è desiata in l' alto cielo:
Or vo' di sua virtù farvi sapere.
Dico: qual vuol gentil donna parere
Vada con lei; chè quando va per via,
Gitta ne' cor villani Amore un gelo,
Per che ogni lor pensiero agghiaccia e père.

⁴⁸ *Vita Nuova, Together with the Version of Dante Gabriel Rossetti*. Edited by H. Oelsner. London: Chatto & Windus. 1908.

E qual soffrisse di starla a vedere
 Diverria nobil cosa, o si morría:
 E quando trova alcun che degno sia
 Di veder lei, quei prova sua virtute;
 Chè gli vien ciò che gli dona salute,
 E sì l'umilia, che ogni offesa oblia.
 Ancor le ha Dio per maggior grazia dato,
 Che non può mal finir chi le ha parlato.⁴⁹

The lineage of Dante goes back to St. Augustine but more immediately to Bernard of Clairvaux and Hugo of St. Victor. The long effort to establish an equilibrium between the rival claims of soul and body was nearing a successful termination when St. Bernard wrote to Guigo, prior of the Grande Chartreuse—

Yet because we are of the flesh (*carnales*) and are begotten through the flesh's concupiscence, our yearning love (*cupiditas vel amor noster*) must begin from the flesh; yet if rightly directed, advancing under the leadership of grace; it will be consummated in spirit. For that which is first is not spiritual, but that which is natural (*animale*); then that which is spiritual.⁵⁰

And for Hugo in his great *De sacramentis Christianae fidei* the world of matter is an outward sign of the indwelling grace of God. It remained for Dante in the next century to bring this great mediaeval ideal to its artistic apotheosis. The long and arduous journey down the steepes and terraces of Hell and up the Mount of Purgation may in a special sense be taken to symbolize the travail of the mediaeval artist. Significantly, when the Earthly Paradise has been reached and the full mastery of his natural powers has been restored to Dante, Beatrice replaces Vergil as his celestial guide. The rank mists of concupiscence having been dissolved the poet looks with unmyopic eyes upon created beauty in its fairest form—the loveliness of woman. For it is only after his long spiritual apprenticeship that he views his beloved, no longer under a symbolical disguise, but in the simple purity of her human personality.

Senza risponder gli occhi su levai,
 e vidi lei che si facea corona,
 riflettendo da sè gli eterni rai.

Da quella region, che più su tuona,
 occhio mortale alcun tanto non dista,
 qualunque in mare più giù s'abbandona,

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Ep. ii, ad Guigonem*, quoted by Taylor in *The Mediaeval Mind*, Vol. I. p. 422.

quanto lì da Beatrice la mia vista;
 ma nulla mi facea, chè sua effige
 non discendeva a me per mezzo mista.⁵¹

This mediaeval synthesis, slowly and painstakingly built up from Augustine to Aquinas, continued to prevail so long as the western mind accepted the fundamental theses of scholastic thought. But the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries saw the final rending of the unity which had made the mediaeval world what it was. Basil Willey, who, among modern scholars, has been distinguished by his appreciation, if not approval, of the mediaeval position, pertinently quotes from Maritain's *St. Thomas Aquinas* on this point:

In the sixteenth century, and more particularly in the age of Descartes, the interior hierarchies of the virtue of reason were shattered. Philosophy abandoned theology to assert its own claim to be considered the supreme science, and, the mathematical science of the sensible world and its phenomena taking precedence at the same time over metaphysics, the human mind began to profess independence of God and Being. Independence of God: that is to say, of the supreme Object of all intelligence, Whom it accepted only half-heartedly until it finally rejected the intimate knowledge of Him supernaturally procured by grace and revelation. Independence of being: that is to say, of the connatural object of the mind as such, against which it ceased to measure itself humbly, until it finally undertook to deduce it entirely from the seeds of geometrical clarity, which it conceived to be innate in itself.⁵²

The shift in man's perspective which took place in the transition from mediaevalism to modernism left the men of the generations in which the transition was effected in an unenviable state. Ruskin, in a highly-colored passage in *The Stones of Venice*⁵³ has described the disastrous effects of the introduction of the pagan renaissance upon the Italian character and, consequently, upon Italian art. But the impact of the new thought on the English poets of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was no less marked. The minds of poets as diverse as Spenser and Lord Herbert of Cherbury are troubled, each in his own way, by the claims of two antithetical

⁵¹ *Paradiso*, Canto XXXI, ll. 70-78.

⁵² *The Seventeenth Century Background*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1934, pp. 8-9.

⁵³ "Men did not indeed openly sacrifice to Jupiter, or build silver shrines for Diana, but the ideas of Paganism nevertheless became thoroughly vital and present with them at all times; and it did not matter in the least, as far as respected the power of true religion, whether the Pagan image was believed in or not, so long as it entirely occupied the thoughts. The scholar of the sixteenth century, if he saw the lightning shining from the east unto the west, thought forthwith of Jupiter, not of the coming of the Son of Man; if he saw the moon walking in brightness, he thought of Diana, not of the throne which was to be established for ever as a faithful

worlds. And above all is this true of John Donne. That division and its consequences have been perhaps most logically described in a recent volume by Nicolai Berdyaev:

Renaissance man is a divided creature, belonging to two worlds, and it is this which makes the complexity and the richness of his creative power. The beginnings of the Renaissance can no longer be taken as merely a re-producing of antiquity, simply a return to paganism. There still remained to them many Christian elements and mediaeval principles, and a man so characteristic of the sixteenth century as Benevenuto Cellini, during the decline of the Renaissance was not only a pagan but a Christian as well.

No; the Renaissance was not and could not be wholly pagan. Its disciples breathed the atmosphere of the classical past, sought there the source of free creation and borrowed from it the perfect forms of its art, but they were emphatically not possessed by the spirit of antiquity. They were men in whose souls thundered a storm born of the clash between pagan and Christian, ancient and mediaeval principles. There could be nothing in them of that classic preciseness and that unity which had been lost for centuries, their art could not engender forms absolutely finished and determined, classically perfect. The Christian soul is imbued with the sense of sin, thirsting for the Redemption and reaching out to another world. That is what killed the old pagan world.⁵⁴

Berdyaev's dictum, of course, does away with that picturesque creation of nineteenth century criticism, the *Renaissancemensch*. That vivid conception of

... die freie, geniale Persönlichkeit, frech frevelnd in verwegener Sündhaftigkeit, dieser Typus eines ästhetischen Immoralismus, dieser herrsche

witness in heaven; and though his heart was but secretly enticed, yet thus he denied the God that is above.

"And, indeed, this double creed, of Christianity confessed and Paganism beloved, was worse than Paganism itself, inasmuch as it refused effective and practical belief altogether. It would have been better to have worshipped Diana and Jupiter at once, than to have gone on through the whole of life naming one God, imagining another and dreading none. Better, a thousandfold to have been "a Pagan suckled in some creed outworn," than to have stood by the great sea of Eternity and seen no God walking on its waves, no heavenly world on its horizon.

"This fatal result of an enthusiasm for classical literature was hastened and heightened by the misdirection of the powers of art. The imagination of the age was actively set to realise these objects of Pagan belief; and all the most exalted faculties of man, which, up to that period, had been employed in the service of Faith, were now transferred to the service of Fiction. The invention which had formerly been both sanctified and strengthened by laboring under the command of settled intention, and on the ground of assured belief, had now the reins laid upon its neck by passion, and all ground of fact cut from beneath its feet; and the imagination which formerly had helped men to apprehend the truth, now tempted them to believe a falsehood. The faculties themselves wasted away in their own treason; one by one they fell in the potter's field; and the Raphael who seemed sent and inspired from heaven that he might paint Apostles and Prophets, sank at once into powerlessness at the feet of Apollo and the Muses." New York: Merrill and Baker, n.d., Vol. III, pp. 107-108.

⁵⁴ *The End of Our Time*. New York: Sheed & Ward Inc., 1933, pp. 18-19.

ruhmsüchtige, machtgierige, unersättliche Genussmensch, dieser frivole Verächter der Religion, der doch mit der Kirche und ihren Dienern Frieden hält, weil er sie für ein unentbehrliches Mittel ansieht, die Masse durch Betrug zu lenken . . .⁵⁵

has become so ingrained in our evaluation of renaissance times that it has tended to engulf the entire era. Not that there was lacking a basis in fact for the Burckhardt-Nietzsche portrait, but rather that the over-emphasis in it leaves one with a distorted perspective. Burdach insists:

Dieses Bild passt in manchen Zügen auf einzelne Menschen der Renaissancezeit, aber gewiss nicht auf ihre schaffenden, wirklichen Führer. Und vergeblich ist das Bemühen, die unendliche Mannigfaltigkeit verschiedenartiger Individualitäten zu einer einheitlichen Gesamtpersönlichkeit zu komprimieren. Im Zeitalter der Renaissance sind tausende und abertausende Bilder für Kirchen bestellt, gemalt, bezahlt worden. Weitaus die Mehrzahl dieser Gemälde durchleuchtet ein so inniges und tiefes religiöses Gefühl, wie es unsere heutigen Maler nicht mehr oder nur selten erreichen, wie es auch dem 18. Jahrhundert fremd war. Sind alle diese Bilder unter völliger Ausschaltung "des Renaissancemenschen" zustande gekommen? Oder besass dieser "Renaissancemensch" die sonst unerhörte magische Kraft in der Kunst das Gegenteil seines inneren Wesens und Wollens auszudrücken und gleich dem Antichrist der christlichen Mythologie dadurch alle Beschauer zu täuschen? Heute denken bei dem Wort Renaissancemensch die meisten an Cesare Borgia, an die fürchterlichen italienischen Stadttyrannen oder an Pietro Aretino. Aber es gab auch im Mittelalter und im Altertum ähnliche vom Rausch der Herrschaft trunkene Wüteriche und laszive Poeten, es gab anderseits in der Renaissance auch edle gerechte Fürsten und viele Dichter von reiner Art. Und war denn der Zeitgenosse des Aretino, Michelangelo, der jenen einen Schuft nannte, kein Renaissancemensch?⁵⁶

But how is the great chasm which separates the two men so undeniably of the Renaissance as Michelangelo and Aretino to be accounted for? The true explanation of course lies hidden in the mystery of the human spirit, but one thing is certain: it is not to be found in attributing the Renaissance solely to the revival of classical paganism.

Fifty years ago Henry Thode called continental Europe's attention to the significance of the mystical humanism of St. Francis as a factor in the Renaissance. Thode's interpretation of the influence of St. Francis was marred by certain unfortunate personal prepossessions, but he was right in pointing out (though in language per-

⁵⁵ Burdach, *Reformation, Renaissance, Humanismus*, p. 102.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 102-103.

haps a bit unhappy) that at the heart of the teachings of St. Francis and his disciples was an insistence on the intimacy of the relationship existing between the Creator and the world which was his handiwork—an insistence of immense importance from the standpoint of art.

Le même miracle s'est produit alors qui, jadis, avait mis au jour le glorieux art grec; les dieux sont devenus hommes, et les hommes dieux. Jusqu'au temps de François, la personne humaine du Christ avait été cachée sous sa personne divine; désormais, c'était l'homme qui, dans Jesus, apparaissait surtout. Et c'est seulement depuis lors que l'art chrétien a pu s'émanciper, car il lui a suffi, depuis lors, de se former un idéal d'après la nature humaine pour pouvoir représenter la beauté divine. En faisant de la nature, jusqu'alors dédaignée, l'intermédiaire légitime entre Dieu et l'homme, François a désigné à l'artiste chrétien le seul vrai maître qui put le diriger. Et il a aussi, en même temps, par la force tendre et pieuse de son imagination de poète, renouvelé l'ancienne matière de la légende chrétienne, de façon à la mettre plus directement à la portée de l'art. C'est sa façon naïve et purement humaine de se représenter l'histoire évangélique, qui a permis à sa prédication et à celle ses disciples d'exercer une action aussi prodigieuse. Le coeur du peuple s'est ému d'amour et de pitié, lorsque l'orateur inspiré a fait revivre sous ses yeux, dans leur simplicité et leur vérité, les touchantes images, de la carrière terrestre du Sauveur. Les images, voilà bien de quoi avait besoin ce peuple illettré à qui s'adressait la prédication franciscaine; et les images ainsi évoquées devant lui s'imprégnaient profondément dans son souvenir, et Jesus devenait réellement le frère corporel, l'ami et le compagnon de l'humble chrétien. De telle sorte que l'artiste, lui aussi, l'ayant vivant dans son coeur, était amené à le représenter dans la simplicité sublime de sa nature d'homme. Ainsi Giotto a pu peindre ses fresques de l'Arena de Padua, toutes fraîches et vivantes, d'une réalité merveilleuse: ainsi est né, en un mot, l'art de la Renaissance.

Car la Renaissance, ou, pour mieux dire, le nouvel art chrétien, a commencé dès le XIII^e siècle. Depuis Giotto jusqu'à Raphael, c'est un développement continu qui s'est poursuivi dans l'art italien, et qui a eu pour fondement une même conception du monde et de Dieu.⁵⁷

Since Thode's time the soundness of the emphasis on the part played by the Christian element, largely as interpreted by the Franciscan movement, in the development of the Renaissance has of course been frankly recognized by numerous European and American scholars.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Henry Thode, *Saint François d'Assise et les origines de l'art de la renaissance en Italie*. Translated by Gaston Lefevre. Paris: Librairie Renouard, Henri Laurens, éditeur, édition revue, pp. 69-70.

⁵⁸ Among the Americans may be mentioned J. B. Fletcher, *Literature of the Italian Renaissance*, 1934, and Henry Osborn Taylor, *Thought and Expression in the Sixteenth Century*. 2 vols. New York: Macmillan Company, 1920.

Up from Assisi in the south of Europe then came the Christian humanism of St. Francis to be met shortly by the pagan humanism rolling westward from Byzantium—a pagan humanism unfortunately not of pristine Attic purity, but a decadent growth in which the worship of form had degenerated into an ill-concealed delight in carnality, and the delight in the testimony of the senses into a hardened sensuality. Little more than fifty years separate the death of Dante from that of Boccaccio, but the triumph of the Byzantine ideal is announced in the latter. In many ways the fourteenth century is the pivot upon which modern history swings. It looks both ways—toward the past and toward the future—but the gaze of so typical a figure as Petrarch is directed oftener toward modernity than toward mediaevalism. In it had been predetermined most of the world-shaking historical events of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; in it too the future courses of literature and the other arts had been irrevocably charted.

Nevertheless, the triumph of paganism was never complete. The Franciscan vision, behind which lay the imperturbability of the Thomistic aesthetic,⁵⁹ was not easily given up, hence the sense of tension, of internal division which Berdyaev has described. The strange mingling in actuality of the antithetic ideologies which could not be reconciled in theory was due, one must believe, to the immense zest for life which underlay the era. The resources of physical and spiritual strength which a thousand years of asceticism had stored up in western Europe were challenged by the Franciscan motive on the one hand and by the Byzantine on the other to recreate either an Earthly Paradise or a Golden Age. Both challenges were accepted with a fervor which is startling to modern minds and in the turmoil which resulted it is not particularly surprising that an occasional cherub or Olympian deity was misplaced.

For the men of the Renaissance, unlike the mythical *Renaissancemensh*, espoused the one ideology but could not forget the other. The advent of the Byzantine culture, while it brought the heady and intoxicating charms of a pagan art which another race had conceived and brought to flower nearly two thousand years before, did not and could not dispel from without a transcendental

⁵⁹ The death of St. Francis, of course, coincides almost exactly with the birth of St. Thomas, but here, as throughout the chapter, I have considered the Franciscan movement and Thomism as parallel flowerings of mediaeval thought. Thomism is, indeed, a rational confirmation of the Franciscan intuitions, and in point of time would be expected to follow the latter.

vision that clerical corruption and papal degradation were impotent to destroy from within. That vision was of man struggling to free himself from the shackles of his own baser self, striving, with a determination quite unperturbed by the difficulty of the effort, to attain to that level of equanimity where in the manifold splendour of created things would be seen steadily to shine the unitive splendour of the Uncreated. The Byzantine idealism triumphed and the Thomistic aesthetic eventually went into eclipse—so far as English letters are concerned it has, since the seventeenth century, reappeared only furtively. But for those of the Renaissance generation the action and inter-action of the two antagonistic forces were factors of prime importance and, wittingly or unwittingly, they were touched by the conflict of the rival aestheticisms.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ It may be objected that the resolution of the major aesthetic implication of the Renaissance movement into a conflict between Byzantine and Franciscan humanism is too facile a solution of a complicated historical problem. "The origins of the Renaissance," writes A. S. Turberville, "take one a long way back—the love of nature to St. Francis; the cult of Rome to Rienzi; the enthusiasm for Greek to Petrarch; the zest for the collection of classical manuscripts to Salutati; interest in classical archaeology to Ciriaco of Ancona; Italian painting at least as far back as Giotto; even sculpture—closely associated as it is with classical models—Ghiberti and Donatello to the unknown workers who adorned the great cathedrals of northern France; the pagan outlook in literature to the *Roman de la Rose*." "Changing Views of the Renaissance," *History*, Vol. XVI (1932), pp. 289-290. And Hans Hefele, "Zum Begriff der Renaissance," *Historisches Jahrbuch*, Vol. XLIX (1929), pp. 444-459, has pointed out the importance of the growth of Italian nationalism, of the rise of the Italian tongue, and of the flourishing of the Guelf idea of the autonomous city state in the subsequent cultural and artistic upsurge. But while there were unquestionably many types of humanists, and among these, the most exemplary Christians (Thomas More, John Colet, James Lefèvre d'Étaples), nevertheless humanism came to have a definitely irreligious connotation. That this was a needless and unfortunate circumstance does not alter the fact. Even today the terms "Christian humanism" and "integral humanism" are used to avoid confusion with the more widely accepted meaning of the word.

CHAPTER IV

DONNE AND THE RIVAL IDEALISMS

WHAT THEN is the relation of John Donne to the manifold implications of the mediaeval aesthetic thought, and to what extent was he influenced by the counter idealism of the Renaissance? These questions focus attention on the most important single factor to be considered in arriving at an evaluation of Donne as a literary artist.

Miss Ramsay, indeed, holds that Donne accepted the Thomistic synthesis—that he is, in truth a “metaphysical” poet of the mediaeval mould.

Ainsi nous considérerons Donne comme poète *métaphysicien*, c'est-à-dire, qui cherche son inspiration dans l'érudition et dans la philosophie de son époque

. . . c'est avec Dante que Donne a le plus de ressemblances, grâce probablement au système identique de philosophie qui leur est commun

Pour cette philosophie, le monde de la nature matérielle n'est point séparé du monde métaphysique. Il n'est que le symbole, la copie d'un autre monde, d'un monde intelligible. Les idées, les formes exemplaires existent éternellement au sein de l'Etre Suprême et par lequel tout a été créé, vers lequel tout se meut.¹

Her position is, I think, untenable, but in maintaining it she has rendered an important service to Donnean criticism by indicating the significance which the scholastic thought assumed in Donne's mind. Actually, I am convinced, Donne rejected the mediaeval synthesis. The true explanation of both his personal and his literary orientation is to be found in his rejection of mediaeval idealism and in his puzzled and unsatisfactory state of mind which resulted from that rejection. Professor Grierson is undeniably right when he asserts that “poems are not written by influences or movements or sources, but come from the living hearts of men.”² And Courthope is unquestionably wrong when he would explain “the identity of essence in the ‘Wit’ which began to be fashionable in almost every European country about the time of the Council of Trent,” and “the great variety of form under which it exhibited itself in different places” by saying that

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 14.

² *Metaphysical Lyrics & Poems of the Seventeenth Century Donne to Butler*. Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1921, p. xvii.

... the general causes of these phenomena are to be found in the decay of the scholastic philosophy and of the feudal system, common to the whole of Europe, and in the revival, at the same time, of the civic standards of antiquity operating on the genius of many rising nations and languages. Such a collision of forces is plainly sufficient to account for that *discordia concors* which Johnson describes as the essence of "Wit"; and further analysis will enable us to trace to the same origin what are generally recognized to be the leading features of "Wit," namely, (1) Paradox, (2) Hyperbole, (3) Excess of Metaphor. All these qualities, which flourish exuberantly in the poetry of the seventeenth century, appear germinally in the poetry of the fourteenth; it is therefore not an unfair conclusion that they belong to a single system of thought, and that their predominance in the later age signifies the efflorescence of decay.³

The linking of the "decay of the scholastic philosophy" with the decline of feudalism and the rise of modern nationalism, is, like his projection of a nineteenth century coloring into the atmosphere of seventeenth century scientific thought, apt to seem more than casually presumptuous to those who will insist that there is a vast difference between the admitted decadence of scholastic thinking in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and the universal ruin of the scholastic edifice which Courthope asserts. Evil as were the days upon which scholasticism had fallen, even in those times it could produce a Baronius and a Bellarmine to shame the miserable army of dabblers in logical quibbles which was its disgrace in their tangled epoch. And certainly to the men of the sixteenth and the first half, at least, of the seventeenth century, scholasticism was not a shattered system—certainly not to Donne of all men.

What really happened was that in those troubled decades men were given a choice between the traditional scholastic and sacramental system with all its idealisms—and its restrictions—and a release from that system—and those restrictions. That I think was the issue—sacramentalism or freedom from sacramentalism—and along with the freedom went the Greek gift from Byzantium.

It was the peculiar tragedy of Donne to be born at a time when the mediaeval synthesis of flesh and spirit had indeed not been entirely forgotten, but when its validity had been seriously challenged by the new-yet-old way of thinking which had reappeared in western Europe in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Donne could never forget the memory of that serene peace which the scholastic thinkers he knew so well had concluded between the apparently disparate

³ *Op. cit.*, Vol. III, pp. 105-106.

elements with which the artist must work, but he chose to embrace the new aesthetic creed—the naturalism of the Renaissance. That decision was a fateful one for Donne himself and for the subsequent centuries.

The divorce in the poet's mind of the sensory and the intellectual—the feeling that these two are not complementary but antagonistic—came early in the English Renaissance. Spenser and many another testify abundantly to this fact. But it is in Donne—so much the mediaevalist, yet so deeply and characteristically modern in this all-important aspect of his work—that the processes of the cleavage can be most clearly traced. That this division was no passing phenomenon but a permanent characteristic bequeathed to modern times is evident from the fact that even during Donne's life the thought of the philosopher who was to instill its distinguishing creed into the post-Renaissance mind was taking shape. For it was René Descartes who formulated the basis for the metaphysics (I use the term unwillingly, and, in the technical sense, contradictorily, but no better is available) of the last three centuries and a half—a metaphysics which is properly a denial of all metaphysics; and the triumph of the system of Descartes has been all but complete.

The Cartesian angel has aged a good deal, he has moulted many times, he is weary. But his undertaking has prospered prodigiously, it has become world-wide, and it holds us under a law which is not gentle. He is an obstinate divider and he has not only separated modern and ancient, but he has set all things against each other—faith and reason, metaphysics and sciences, knowledge and love. The intelligence turned by him to the practical utilization of matter overflows in action which is external, transitive and also material.⁴

Only two decades separated Descartes and Donne, and the division which Descartes rationalized—it was a division not only of faith and reason, of metaphysics and sciences, of knowledge and love, but what is particularly important for the artist, of flesh and spirit, of body and soul—Donne achieved in the instinctive manner of the poet. The synthesis of the natural and supernatural which came so easily to a Dante and a Francis of Assisi was not possible for Donne; of that synthesis he retained only the negative phase, the prohibitory note, which even a critic so thoroughly in disagreement with my interpretation of him as Mrs. Simpson points out in comparing him with Martial.

⁴ Jacques Maritain, *Three Reformers*. London: Sheed & Ward, 1928, p. 89.

He had a far more complex and passionate soul than we can discern in Domitian's poet. Between the two there lie fifteen centuries of Catholic Christianity and Martial's utter lack of moral scruple was not possible to Donne.⁵

But even with that prohibitory echo ringing in his ears (and he never escaped it, try as he would, in his most libertine moments) Donne willingly ranged himself in the van of the ranks of modernism.⁶

Mrs. Simpson has noted the prevalent morbidity in Donne and would explain it by saying:

One is tempted to think that Donne had seen some horrible sight in childhood which left its mark on his highly sensitive nature. All his poetry and his prose, from the earliest to the latest, has traces of this obsession.⁷

Is it too fanciful to suppose that Donne, even in his precocious childhood, had had a vision of the death of a culture and the annihilation of a civilization? Not the mere shattering of the Ptolemaic conception of the universe, but the final rejection by the Renaissance spirit of a metaphysical system, and with that an ethical and aesthetic system, which for a thousand years of mediaeval advance had explained away the doubts and ministered to the misgivings from which the spirit of man is never free—that was the sight which lay heavy, consciously, I am convinced, upon the mind of Donne, and unconsciously upon many another Renaissance poet.

In analyzing Donne's conformity to, or deviation from, the mediaeval ways of thinking there is scarcely a more illuminating passage in his entire works than the often-quoted concluding lines of *The Progress of the Soule*:

Ther's nothing simply good, nor ill alone,
Of every quality comparison,
The onely measure is, and judge, opinion.

Even allowing for the curiously satirical nature of the poem in which

⁵ Evelyn M. Simpson, "Donne's Paradoxes and Problems," *A Garland for John Donne 1631-1931*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1931, p. 26.

⁶ The essence of the modern spirit is aptly set forth by Santayana in *Three Philosophical Poets*: "Throw open to the young poet the infinity of nature; let him feel the precariousness of life, the variety of purposes, civilizations, and religions even upon this little planet; let him trace the triumphs and follies of art and philosophy, and their perpetual resurrections—like that of the downcast Faust. If, under the stimulus of such a scene, he does not some day compose a natural comedy as much surpassing Dante's divine comedy in sublimity and richness as it will surpass it in truth, the fault will not lie with the subject, which is inviting and magnificent, but with the halting genius that cannot render that subject worthily." Triton edition. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1926, Vol. VI, p. 139.

⁷ *A Study of the Prose Works of John Donne*. Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1924, p. 55.

these lines occur, they express a sentiment strikingly modern. If one may agree with Miss Ramsay that the new science was a negligible factor in shaping the mind and the thought of Donne, one cannot likewise agree with her as to the influence of the new metaphysics. Her contention that Hobbes is the source of the first thorough-going scepticism in English thought again is tenable, but between mediaeval certainty and Hobbes' doubt is a long period of transition, and evidences of the transition in the realms of ethics and aesthetics are distinctly traceable in Donne, notably in the lines just quoted.

Strikingly akin to the final lines of *The Progresse of the Soule* in their suggestion of ethical scepticism is the passage from *An Anatomie of the World*, already referred to in another connection, beginning

'Tis all in peeces, all cohaerence gone;
All just supply, and all Relation:

Interpreted in the light of the lines which follow it—

Prince, Subject, Father, Sonne, are things forgot,
For every man alone thinkes he hath got
To be a Phoenix, and that then can bee
None of that kinde, of which he is, but hee.

—rather than in the literal light of the “Element of fire is quite put out” lines which precede it, this passage likewise confirms an attitude of spiritual, not purely intellectual, bewilderment.

There is to be found in Donne then, I believe, the reflection neither of the complete invalidation of the mediaeval thought, which Courthope asserts, nor, on the other hand, the untroubled reliance on the mediaeval premises, which Miss Ramsay analyzes. The latter is far nearer to the spirit of Donne and of his age than is Courthope, but her failure to recognize the points wherein Donne breaks definitely, even defiantly, with the mediaeval tradition, closes to her the way to a true understanding of him. Great as was Donne's debt and manifold as were the chains which bound him to the mediaeval, he was far from a mediaevalist. As T. S. Eliot says:

In his whole temper indeed, Donne is the antithesis of the scholastic, of the mystic and of the philosophical system maker. The encyclopaedic ambitions of the schoolmen were directed always towards unification: a *summa* was the end to be attained, and every branch of knowledge and practice was to have its relation to the whole. In Donne, there is a manifest fissure between thought and sensibility, a chasm which in his poetry he bridged in his own way, which was not the way of mediaeval poetry. His learning is

just information suffused with emotion, or combined with emotion not essentially relevant to it. In the poetry of Dante, and even of Guido Cavalcanti, there is always the assumption of an ideal unity in experience, the faith in an ultimate rationalisation and harmonisation of experience, the subsumption of the lower under the higher, an ordering of the world more or less Aristotelian. But perhaps one reason why Donne has appealed so powerfully to the recent time is that there is in his poetry hardly any attempt at organization; rather a puzzled and humorous shuffling of the pieces; and we are inclined to read our own more conscious awareness of the apparent irrelevance and unrelatedness of things into the mind of Donne.⁸

This loss of unity in art, which Eliot finds exemplified in Donne, did not indeed begin with him, for Donne was, as I have insisted, a transitional figure; rather it can be traced back as far as the fourteenth century when the disintegration of mediaevalism began.⁹ Adams noted it in architecture:

As early as the fourteenth century, signs of unsteadiness appeared, and, before the eighteenth century, unity became only a reminiscence. The old habit of centralizing a strain at one point, and dividing and subdividing it, and distributing it on visible lines of support to a visible foundation, disappeared in architecture soon after 1500, but lingered in theology two centuries longer; and even, in very old-fashioned communities, far down to our own time; but its values were forgotten, and it survived chiefly as a stock jest against the clergy.¹⁰

And in poetry the same centrifugal process, of which Donne's work was only an incident, although an important one, was operating.

Virtually every critic who has written of him has called attention to the symptoms of tension and strain which are perpetually evincing themselves in Donne, the effect of which was to separate him from his age, to divide him from himself, and to alienate him from the past. Of the first of these severances, Gosse has spoken luminously. In contrast with the Elizabethan poets, who were notably inclined toward sociability, Donne, according to this critic, was distinguished by the "complete intellectual isolation of his youth and middle age." After the *Satires* he gave no more hostages to literary fashion. Scornful of the prevailing modes of poetry he made no concessions to the

⁸ "Donne in Our Time," *A Garland for John Donne 1631-1931*, p. 8.

⁹ It may seem that I am here admitting that for which I have censured Courthope. On this point I must make myself clear. The defection of certain of its followers—even the perfervid attacks of enemies—does not connote the universal ruin of a system of thought. My whole quarrel with Courthope lies in his categorical projection into the late English Renaissance of a spiritual *milieu* which actually came into existence much later and in his failure to realize that an artist may verbally and formally reject a philosophy of thought to which in his innermost being he instinctively pays allegiance.

¹⁰ *Op. cit.*, p. 382.

spirit of the time. "One is left with the impression that Donne would not have turned to see Edmund Spenser go by, nor have passed into an inner room at the Mermaid to listen to the talk of Shakespeare."¹¹

Of the second, Professor Grierson is cognizant as he justifiably draws a parallel between Donne and Tennyson on this point:

Alike in his poetry and in his soberest prose, treatise or sermon, Donne's mind seems to want the high seriousness which comes from a conviction that truth is, and is to be found. A spirit of scepticism and paradox plays through and disturbs almost everything he wrote, except at moments when an intense mood of feeling, whether love or devotion, begets faith, and silences the sceptical and destructive wit by the power of vision rather than of intellectual conviction. Poles apart as these two poets seem at a first glance to lie in feeling and in art, there is yet something of Tennyson in the conflict which wages perpetually in Donne's poetry between feeling and intellect.¹²

Professor Grierson likewise calls attention to the gulf which divides the spirit of Donne from the spirit of the mediaeval love poets.

Donne uses the method, the dialectic of the mediaeval love-poets, the poets of the *dolce stil nuovo*, Guinicelli, Cavalcanti, Dante, and their successors, the intellectual, argumentative evolution of their canzoni, but he uses it to express a temper of mind and a conception of love which are at the opposite poles from their lofty idealism.¹³

And, complementarily, the same critic finds that the characteristic note in Donne's love poetry is its paganism.

There is no echo of Petrarch's woes in Donne's passionate and insolent raptures and angry songs and elegies. The love which he portrays is not the impassioned yet intellectual idealism of Dante, nor the refined and adoring sentiment of Petrarch, nor the epicurean but courtly love of Ronsard, nor the passionate, chivalrous, gallantry of Sidney. It is the love of the Latin lyrists and elegiasts, a feeling which is half rapture and half rage, for one who is never conceived of for a moment as standing to the poet in the ideal relationship of Beatrice to Dante or of Laura to Petrarch.¹⁴

Of the stress and strain in Donne there is then no dispute; but the explanations of its presence have been hardly satisfactory. Arthur Symons, writing at the end of the last century, emphasized the physical causes:

Everything in Donne seems to me to explain itself in that fundamental

¹¹ *Op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 330.

¹² *The Poems of John Donne*. Vol. II, p. x.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. xxxv.

¹⁴ *The Cambridge History of English Literature*. Ed. by A. W. Ward and A. R. Waller. Cambridge: At the University Press, 1909, Vol. IV, p. 210.

uncertainty of aim, and his uncertainty of aim partly by a morbid physical condition.¹⁵

To the physical factor Miss Ramsay adds others:

Ces sentiments sont due en partie à des causes physiques mais sont aussi inhérentes à ce tempérament ardent en même temps que tourmenté, à ce mélange si rare de passion et d'intellect, et finalement sont due aussi aux circonstances particulières de son éducation et de sa vie.¹⁶

But far more important than any physical disease—ininitely more significant in unravelling the mystery of Donne than any inherited traits or than any outward circumstances of his education or life—was, I am convinced, the spiritual ague with which that “burning and tormented temperament” was afflicted, as, deprived of the mediaeval vision which he had rejected, yet hearing ever in his heart the thunderous clash between “pagan and Christian, ancient and mediaeval principles,” he flung himself upon the artist’s perennial problem—the problem of the reconciliation of the body and the soul, of the adjudication of the rival claims of flesh and spirit.

Certain critics, Professor Grierson the ablest among them, hold that Donne, in some of his love poetry at least, effected a satisfactory synthesis of the two warring worlds.

What then is the philosophy which disengages itself from Donne’s love-poetry studied in its whole compass? It seems to me that it is more than a purely negative one, that consciously or unconsciously, he sets over against the abstract idealism, the sharp dualism of the Middle Ages, a justification of love as a natural passion in the human heart the meaning and end of which is marriage. The sensuality and exaggerated cynicism of so much of the poetry of the Renaissance was a reaction from courtly idealism and mediaeval asceticism. But a mere reaction could lead no whither. There are no steps which lead only backward in the history of human thought and feeling. Poems like Donne’s *Elegies*, like Shakespeare’s *Venus and Adonis*, like Marlowe’s *Hero and Leander* could only end in penitent outcries like those of Sidney and Spenser and of Donne himself. The true escape from courtly or ascetic idealism was a poetry which should do justice to love as a passion in which body and soul alike have their part, and of which there is no reason to repent.

And this with all its imperfections Donne’s love poetry is. It was not for nothing that Sir Thomas Egerton’s secretary made a runaway match for love. For Dante the poet, his wife did not exist. In love of his wife Donne found the meaning and the infinite value of love. In later days he might bewail his “idolatry of profane mistresses”; he never repented of having

¹⁵ “John Donne,” *Figures of Several Centuries*. London: Constable and Company Ltd., 1916, pp. 90-91.

¹⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 17.

loved. Between his most sensual and his most spiritual love-songs there is no cleavage such as separates natural love from Dante's love of Beatrice, who is in the end Theology. The passion that burns in Donne's most outspoken elegies, and wantons in the Epithalamia, is not cast out in *The Anniversarie* or *The Canonization*, but absorbed. It is purified and enriched by being brought into harmony with his whole nature, spiritual as well as physical. It has lost the exclusive consciousness of itself which is lust, and become merged in an entire affection, as a turbid and discoloured stream is lost in the sea.

This justification of natural love as fullness of joy and life is the deepest thought in Donne's love-poems, far deeper and sincerer than the Platonic conceptions of the affinity and identity of souls with which he plays in some of the verses addressed to Mrs. Herbert.¹⁷

With due respect to Professor Grierson's otherwise profound scholarship, it is evident that in this passage he does scant justice to the essence of the mediaeval aesthetic. If by the somewhat equivocal term "natural passion," he means that normal and healthful love of man for woman which, while not denying its roots in the flesh, is never bestial, then he is wrong in denying that this was the flame which lit Dante's heart. Moreover, when he approvingly quotes Pascal (a dangerous authority when the question at issue is that of the reconciling of the flesh and the spirit) to the effect that in love "the body disappears from sight in the intellectual and spiritual passion which it has kindled," he is himself guilty of the dualism which he ascribes to the Middle Ages. But Professor Grierson apparently is not quite satisfied with his heroic attempts to spiritualize *The Extasie*:

There hangs about the poem just a suspicion of the conventional and unreal Platonism of the seventeenth century. In attempting to state and vindicate the relation of soul and body he falls perhaps inevitably into the appearance, at any rate, of the dualism which he is trying to transcend. He places them over against each other as separate entities and the lower bulks unduly.¹⁸

Another critic who follows Professor Grierson in his belief that Donne succeeded in establishing an equilibrium between soul and body is George Williamson. Unlike Professor Grierson, however, who admits a cleavage between Donne's religious poetry and his secular poetry,¹⁹ Williamson even finds a thread of essential unity linking these.

¹⁷ *The Poems of John Donne*. Vol. II, pp. xlv-xlvi.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. xlvii. ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. li.

For Donne, whether the priest of Apollo or of God, is always a poet of the same essential nature, and his ruling concept arises from his unified sensibility and corresponds to his organic way of thinking. In his life, as in his poems, all his moods are implicit in the mood dominant at a given moment; the priest is in the lover, and the lover in the priest; the divine poem is implicit in the love song, and the love song in the divine poem.²⁰

Not satisfied with this reconciliation, Williamson goes farther:

Donne was capable of unifying not only the passion and levity of Catullus, but also the thought of Lucretius and the divinity of Andrewes.²¹

Miss Ramsay too, while admitting the extreme naturalism of some of his early poems, feels that Donne achieved a final synthesis of the warring claims of body and soul:

Cette théorie de l'union des trois âmes indique en réalité une conception sur laquelle nous ne saurions trop insister chez Donne: celle de la dépendance réciproque des deux parties qui forment l'homme. Elle est à la base de toutes ses réflexions sur l'homme et sur la vie présente. Dans la partie antérieure de notre étude nous avons parlé de la période de révolte, de réalisme outré de sa jeunesse. Dans la hardiesse cynique, affectée peut-être plutôt que profonde, des poèmes de la première partie de son oeuvre, il semble oublier entièrement le côté spirituel, et appuyer sur les facultés inférieures de l'âme humaine. Ce sont les pièces dont il s'est repenti plus tard. Mais il n'a jamais même dans les moments d'exaltation, où il se montre le plus profondément conscient de l'éternel et de l'intelligible, oublié, ni négligé la part du corps. Le corporel doit servir au spirituel; et l'âme a aussi quelque chose à gagner par son union avec le corps.²²

Partially opposed to these views, which find Donne achieving a satisfactory resolution of the central conflict in his thought, are those of Louis I. Bredvold, who sees in the youthful Donne, at least, an advocate of Renaissance naturalism. After citing passages from certain of the *Elegies* and other of the early love poems to indicate the revolutionary character of Donne's ideas on love and the scepticism and relativism of his philosophic tenets, Bredvold goes on to say that the sceptical reflections in these poems are not casually introduced but are the fruit of study. Three distinct principles, Bredvold asserts, emerge from Donne's love verses. According to the first of these, love is a purely physical relation; according to the second, love's "justification is Natural Law—not the universal Law of Nature, *Ius naturale*, which was then usually understood to be the basis of the moral code but the 'natural' condition of liberty, of change, the 'natural' free-

²⁰ *The Donne Tradition*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1930, p. 51.

²¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 146.

²² *Op. cit.*, p. 204.

dom from the restraints of society"; according to the third, the social code is merely the result of custom and has no other basis than opinion. Donne's reversal of the theory of the *Ius naturale*, "the fundamental and central doctrine of political thought and social ethics in Europe from the Stoics and Cicero through the Renaissance" was deliberate, Bredvold holds, and his readers were aware of his audacity.²³ Despite the boldness of these oft-repeated ideas, their originality with Donne, Bredvold thinks, was more apparent than real;²⁴ actually he was repeating conceptions current in a "definite Renaissance school of Scepticism and Naturalism." But while Bredvold has perhaps gone further than any one else in analyzing Donne's naturalism he agrees with the generality of Donne's biographers that the poet was finally converted from his "libertine" ideas, "chiefly by his marriage."

Hugh I'Anson Fausset, on the other hand, in the conclusion of his eloquent but at times contradictory study finds no such final resolution of the conflict:

Such a morality, such a self-sufficiency of soul and emancipation of mind as is plain to read not only in a modern like Tchekov, but in the purest utterance of almost every artist in the past, was beyond the scope of Donne's discordant personality. And so his style, whether as poet or preacher, never achieved either the fresh effusive gaiety or the assured serenity of Absolute Beauty.

He could not create beauty out of life, he could not even see the beauty in which the limbs of life were veiled, which flowed through and over the bleak anatomy of fact; consecrating the perishable dust and redeeming it of squalor and grossness—because he lacked harmony in himself; and for the same reason he could only aggravate the horrors of death by endowing it with animality.

Too mature for that Classic Grace which even in its wantonness preserved an innocence of body and of mind, a divine naturalness, he was yet too primitive for Romantic vision. He represents as it were only the tangled roots of the Gothic, that turbulent obscurity out of which were born, in purer souls than his, not only grinning gargoyles but a miracle of tapering spires.²⁵

The Reverend Cyril Tomkinson, too, in an article devoted chiefly to a defense of Donne's sincerity in taking orders, alludes to Donne's failure to synthesize the spiritual and the physical:

²³ Cf. "The Naturalism of Donne in Relation to Some Renaissance Traditions," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, Vol. XXII (1923), pp. 475-476.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 501.

²⁵ *John Donne, A Study in Discord*. London: Jonathan Cape Ltd., 1924, pp. 316-317.

Many a saint has been far more wicked than Donne; yet being more healthy minded, he has been able to "forget those things that are behind," winning his way into a serener air. But Donne seems to have been miserably over-conscious of the body. . . .²⁶

But why this difference of opinion concerning a phase of Donne's thought so strikingly important that there would seem to be no room for critical divergence?

An analysis of Donne's works, both prose and poetry, will reveal the answer. Strangely divided as his mind is on this, as on other problems, his utterances will, on comparison, be found amazingly contradictory. On the one hand he is an impassioned defender of the dignity of the body. In *The Litanie* he prayed that he would not cultivate the soul at the expense of the body—

From thinking us all soule, neglecting thus
Our mutuall duties, Lord deliver us.

In the *Pseudo-Martyr* he insists that the body is far from a mere lesser partner of the soul:

It is intire man that God hath care of, and not the soule alone; therefore his first worke was the body, and the last worke shall bee the glorification thereof. He hath not delivered us over to a Prince only, as to a Physitian, and to a Lawyer, to looke to our bodies and estates; and to the Priest onely, as to a Confessor, to looke to, and examine our soules, but the Priest must as wel endeavour, that we live virtuously and innocently in this life for society here, as the Prince, by his lawes keepes us in the way to heaven: for thus they accomplish a *Regale Sacerdotium*, when both doe both; for we are sheepe to them both, and they in divers relations sheepe to one another.²⁷

In a sermon preached at St. Paul's on the evening of Easter Sunday, 1623, he is emphatic in his insistence on the necessity, to the dignity of man, of the resurrection of the body:

Beloved, we make the ground and foundation of the resurrection, to be, not merely the omnipotency of God, for God will not do all, that he can do: but the ground is *Omnipotens voluntas Dei revelata*, The Almighty will of God revealed by him, to us: and therefore Christ joins both these together, *Ye err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God*; that is, not considering the power of God, as it is revealed in the Scriptures: for there is our foundation of this doctrine: we know, out of the omnipotence of God, it may be; and we know out of the Scriptures it must be: that works upon our faith, this upon our reason; that it is man that must be saved, man that

²⁶ "A Note on the Personal Religion of Dr. Donne," *The Bookman*, Vol. 79 (March, 1931), p. 345.

²⁷ *Pseudo-Martyr*. London: Printed by W. Stansby for Walter Burre, 1610, p. 17.

must be damned; and to constitute a man there must be a body, as well as a soul. Nay, the immortality of the soul, will not so well lie in proof, without a resuming of the body. For, upon those words of the apostle, *If there were no resurrection, we were the miserablest of all men*, the school reasons reasonably: naturally the soul and the body are united; when they are separated by death, it is contrary to nature, which nature still affects this union; and consequently the soul is the less perfect, for this separation; and it is not likely, that the perfect natural state of the soul, which is, to be united to the body, should last but three or four score years, and, in most, much less, and the unperfect state, that in the separation, should last eternally, for ever: so that either the body must be believed to live again, or the soul believed to die.

Never therefore dispute against thine own happiness; never say, God asks the heart, that is, the soul, and therefore rewards the soul, or punishes the soul, and hath no respect to the body; *Nec auferamus cogitationes a collegio carnis*, says Tertullian, Never go about to separate the thoughts of the heart, from the college, from the fellowship of the body; *Si quidem in carne, et cum carne, et per carnem agitur, quicquid ab anima agitur*, All that the soul does, it does in, and with, and by the body. And therefore, (says he also) *Caro abluitur, ut anima emaculetur*, The body is washed in baptism, but it is that the soul might be made clean; *Caro ungitur, ut anima consecratur*, In all unctions, whether that which was then in use in baptism, or that which was in use at our transmigration, and passage out of this world, the body was anointed, that the soul might be consecrated; *Caro signatur*, (says Tertullian still) *ut anima muniatur*: The body is signed with the cross, that the soul might be armed against temptations; and again, *Caro de corpore Christi vescitur, ut anima de Deo saginetur*; My body received the body of Christ, that my soul might partake of his merits. He extends it into many particulars, and sums up all thus, *Non possunt in mercede separari, quae opera conjungunt*, These two, body, and soul, cannot be separated forever, which, whilst they are together, concur in all that either of them do. Never think it presumption, says St. Gregory, *Sperare in te, quod in se exhibuit Deus homo*, To hope for that in thyself, which God admitted when, he took thy nature upon him. And God hath made it, says he, more easy than so, for thee to believe it, because not only Christ himself, but such men, as thou art, did rise at the resurrection of Christ. And therefore when our bodies are dissolved and liquefied in the sea, putrefied in the earth, resolved to ashes in the fire, macerated in the air, *Velut in vasa sua transfunditur caro nostra*, make account that all the world is God's cabinet, and water, and earth, and fire, and air, are the proper boxes, in which God lays up our bodies, for the resurrection.²⁸

Comparable in sentiment is this passage from his Easter sermon of 1626:

We are assured then of a resurrection, and we see how that assurance grows. But of what? Of all, body and soul too; for, *Quod cadit resurgit*,

²⁸ Alford, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 320-322.

says St. Hierome, all that is fallen, receives a resurrection; and that is *suppositum*, says the school, that is, the person, the whole man, not taken in pieces, soul alone, or body alone, but both. For as Damascene expresses the same that St. Hierome intends, *Resurrectio est eius quod cecidit iterata surrectio*, The resurrection is a new rising of that which fell; and man fell. A man is not saved, a sinner is not redeemed, I am not received into heaven, if my body be left out; the soul and the body concurred to the making of a sinner, and body and soul must concur to the making of a saint.²⁹

An even more perfect statement of the need for and possibility of a reconciliation of the two sides of man's nature is found in the Christ-mas sermon preached at St. Paul's in 1622:

There is a heavenly zeal, but if it be not reconciled to discretion, there is a heavenly purity, but if it be not reconciled to the bearing of one another's infirmities, there is a heavenly liberty, but if it be not reconciled to a care for the prevention of scandal, all things in our heaven and our earth are not reconciled in Christ. In a word, till the flesh and the spirit be reconciled, this reconciliation is not accomplished. For neither spirit nor flesh must be destroyed in us; a spiritual man is not all spirit, he is a man still. But then is flesh and spirit reconciled in Christ, when in all the faculties of the soul, and all the organs of the body, we glorify him in this world; for then, in the next world we shall be glorified by him and with him in soul and in body too, where we shall be thoroughly reconciled to one another, no suits, no controversies; and thoroughly to the angels; when we shall not only be as the angels in some one property, but equal to the angels in all; for *non erunt duae societates angelorum et hominum*, men and angels shall not make two companies, *sed omnium beatitudo erit, uni adhaerere Deo*, this shall be the blessedness of them both, to be united in one head, Christ Jesus.³⁰

Not only does Donne, as in these passages, formally argue for the worthiness of the body as a full partner of the soul in all its undertakings; he at times even insists that the soul itself is a gainer by its union with the flesh. Thus in the epistle, *To Sr Henry Goodyere*, he wrote:

Our soule, whose country is heaven, and God her father,
 Into this world, corruptions sinke, is sent,
 Yet, so much in her travaile she doth gather,
 That she returns home, wiser then she went.

But if Donne, on occasion, could, even in his poetry, rise to the defense of the body, more frequent passages are to be found, both in his prose and in his poetry, in which he thinks of the body as a source of infection. There are these lines in *The Second Anniversarie*:

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 371.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 19-20.

Thinke further on thy selfe, my Soule, and thinke
 How thou at first wast made but in a sinke;
 Thinke that it argued some infirmitie,
 That those two soules, which then thou foundst in me,
 Thou fedst upon, and drewst into thee, both
 My second soule of sense, and first of growth.
 Thinke but how poor thou wast, how obnoxious;
 Whom a small lumpe of flesh could poyson thus.
 This curded milke, this poore unlittered whelpe
 My body, could, beyond escape or helpe
 Infect thee with Originall sinne and thou
 Couldst neither then refuse, nor leave it now.
 Thinke that no stubborne sullen Anchorit,
 Which fixt to a pillar, or a grave, doth sit
 Bedded, and bath'd in all his ordures, dwels
 So fowly as our Soules in their first-built Cels.
 Thinke in how poor a prison thou didst lie
 After, enabled but to suck, and crie.
 Thinke, when 'twas growne to most, 'twas a poor Inne,
 A Province pack'd up in two yards of skinne,
 And that usurp'd or threatned with the rage
 Of sicknesses, or their true mother, Age.
 But thinke that Death hath now enfranchis'd thee,
 Thou hast thy expansion now, and libertie;

Of a similar tenor are these lines (some of which have been previously cited for another purpose) from one of the epistles *To The Countesse of Bedford*:

As dead low earth eclipses and controules
 The quick high Moone; so doth the body, Soules.
 In none but us, are such mixed engines found,
 As hands of double office: For, the ground
 We till with them; and them to heav'n wee raise;
 Who prayer-lesse labours, or, without this, prayes,
 Doth but one halfe, that's none; He which said, *Plough*
And looke not back, to looke up doth allow.
 Good seed degenerates, and oft obeyes
 The soyles disease, and into cockle strays;
 Let the minds thoughts be but transplanted so,
 Into the body, and bastardly they grow.
 What hate could hurt our bodies like our love?
 Wee (but no forraine tyrants could) remove
 These not ingrav'd, but inborne dignities,
 Caskets of soules; Temples, and Palaces:
 For, bodies shall from death redeemed bee,
 Soules but preserv'd, not naturally free.

As men to our prisons, new soules to us are sent,
 Which learne vice there, and come in innocent.
 First seeds of every creature are in us,
 What ere the world hath bad, or pretious,
 Mans body can produce, hence it hath beene
 That stones, wormes, frogges, and snakes in man are seene:
 But who ere saw, though nature can worke soe,
 That pearle, or gold, or corne in man did grow?

Professor Grierson, by a train of reasoning which I find unconvincing, sees, strangely, in these last lines an affirmation of the congeniality of soul and body.³¹ To me it seems that, far from refusing to accept the antithesis between body and soul, Donne, in these lines, is confirming it; not that he lacked a vision of the perfect reconciliation of the two, for he was an heir of the thought of the Middle Ages and of the Thomistic aesthetic; but here, I am convinced, he is merely saying, in the spirit of Puritan denial, and despite that vision, that in the melancholy circumstances of life the body is a perpetual source of ill to the soul.

But, lest the evidence thus far presented be called glancing, and circumstantial, there is at least one passage in Donne's prose in which he declares without equivocation that the body is the source of the soul's contamination:

And hereby they make *Baptisme* in respect of Soveraintie, to bee no better than the bodie in respect of the soule. For, as the bodie by inhaerent corruption vitiates the pure and innocent soule, so they accuse *Baptisme* to cast an Originall servitude and frailtie upon Soveraintie; . . .³²

Mrs. Simpson has gone so far as to say that Donne is a disciple of

³¹ "The tenor of Donne's thought seems to me to be as follows: He is speaking of the soul's eclipse by the body (ll. 40-42), by the body which should itself be an organ of the soul's life, of prayer as well as labour (ll. 43-48). He returns in ll. 49-52 to the main theme of the body's corrupting influence, and this leads him to a new thought. It is not only the soul which suffers by this absorption in the body, but the body itself; "What hate could hurt our bodies like our love?" By this descent of the soul into the body we deprive the latter of its proper dignity, to be the Casket, Temple, Palace of the Soul. Then Donne turns aside to enforce the dignity of the Body. It will be redeemed from death, and the Soul is only preserved. No more than the Body is the Soul naturally immortal. These lines are almost a parenthesis. The poet returns once more to his main theme, the degradation of the soul by our exclusive regard for the body.

"Thus the deepest thought of Donne's poetry, his love poetry and his religious poetry, emerges here again. He will not accept the antithesis between soul and body. The dignity of the body is hardly less than that of the soul. But we cannot exalt the body at the expense of the soul. If we immerse the soul in the body it is not the soul alone which suffers but the body also. In the highest spiritual life, as in the fullest and most perfect love, body and soul are complementary, are merged in each other; . . ." *The Poems of John Donne*, Vol. II, p. 161.

³² *Pseudo-Martyr*, p. 247.

St. Augustine in his ideas of the relation of soul and body,³³ but even with due allowances for all the inconsistencies and waverings of which Donne was guilty, it would seem impossible to reconcile St. Augustine's statement that "it was not the corruptible flesh that made the soul sinful, but the sinful soul that made the flesh corruptible,"³⁴ with Donne's flat contradiction of it.

From the failure of Donne to achieve a satisfactory synthesis of the rival claims of flesh and spirit flows, I believe, another characteristic trait which critics have universally noted in him—his obsession with death. Typical of many macabre utterances in his prose is this passage from one of the Lincoln's Inn Sermons:

If the whole body were an eye, or an ear, where were the body, says St. Paul; but when of the whole body there is neither eye nor ear, nor any member left, where is the body? And what should an eye do there, when there is nothing to be seen but loathsomeness; or a nose there, where there is nothing to be smelt but putrefaction; or an ear, where in the grave they do not praise God? Doth not that body that boasted but yesterday of that privilege above all creatures, that it only could go upright, lie today as flat upon the earth as the body of a horse, or of a dog? And doth it not tomorrow lose his other privilege, of looking up to heaven? Is it not farther removed from the eye of heaven, the sun, than any dog, or horse, by being covered with the earth, which they are not? Painters have presented to us with some horror, the skeleton, the frame of the bones of a man's body; but the state of a body, in the dissolution of the grave, no pencil can present to us. Between that excremental jelly that the body is made of at first, and that jelly which thy body dissolves to at last; there is not so noisome, so putrid a thing in nature.³⁵

Similarly illustrative of the sepulchral note which fixes the mood of so many of the sermons are the two passages which follow. The first is from a Lenten sermon preached at Whitehall, March 8, 1621, on the text, "The last Enemy that shall be destroyed, is Death."

But when I lie under the hands of that enemy, that hath reserved himself to the last, to my last bed, then when I shall be able to stir no limb in any other measure than a fever or palsy shall shake them, when everlasting

³³ "In this view of the relation of body and soul, Donne follows Augustine rather than Plotinus. The Neo-platonists held that the descent of the soul into the body was a direct source of evil. Contact with matter defiles the spiritual principle. This is not the teaching of Augustine, who says that it is the soul which sins, and causes the body to become defiled. Donne was profoundly convinced of the wretchedness to which the body is subject in this mortal life. His frequent ill-health caused him to cry out at times against his body as the prison or the tomb in which he was confined. Yet no writer is more emphatic in his statement of the true dignity of this ailing, tortured flesh, which in spite of all its weakness was not disdained as a tabernacle by the Son of God himself." *Op. cit.*, pp. 99-100.

³⁴ *The City of God*, Book XIV, 3.

³⁵ Alford, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 231.

darkness shall have an inchoation in the present dimness of mine eyes; and the everlasting gnashing in the present chattering of my teeth, and the everlasting worm in the present gnawing of the agonies of my body, and anguishes of my mind; when the last enemy shall watch my remediless body, and my disconsolate soul there, there, where not the physician, in his way, perchance not the priest in his, shall be able to give any assistance, and when he hath sported himself with my misery upon that stage, my deathbed, shall shift the scene, and throw me from that bed, into the grave, and there triumph over me, God knows how many generations, till the Redeemer, my Redeemer, the Redeemer of all me, body as well as soul, come again; as death is the enemy which watches me, at my last weakness, and shall hold me, when I shall be no more, till that Angel come, *Who shall say, and swear that time shall be no more*, in that consideration, in that apprehension, he is the powerfulest, the fearfulest enemy; . . .³⁶

The second is from the famous "Death's Duel," Donne's farewell sermon preached before the king, also at Whitehall, February 12, 1631.

But then this *exitus a morte*, is but *introitus in mortem*: this issue, this deliverance from that death, the death of the womb, is an entrance, a delivering over to another death, the manifold deaths of this world. We have a winding-sheet in our mother's womb, that grows with us from our conception, and we come into the world wound up in that winding-sheet; for we come to seek a grave. And, as prisoners, discharged of actions, may lie for fees, so when the womb hath discharged us, yet we are bound to it by cords of flesh, by such a string, as that we cannot go thence, nor stay there. We celebrate our own funeral with cries, even at our birth, as though our three score and ten years of life were spent in our mother's labour, and our circle made up in the first point thereof. We beg one baptism with another, a sacrament of tears; and we come into a world that lasts many ages, but we last not.³⁷

This note, of course, has a certain appropriateness in the pulpit, particularly in the Lenten sermons, but it is not confined to that portion of Donne's work. It is heard again and again in his poetry, even in his love poetry, as a sombre *memento mori* echoing above the sound of the lover's laughter. The two passages that spring instantly to mind are the opening lines of *The Funerall*,

Who ever comes to shroud me, do not harme

Nor question much

That subtile wreath of haire, which crownes my arme;

and from *The Relique*, the even more familiar,

A bracelet of bright haire about the bone.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 244.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, Vol. VI, p. 282.

But the macabre note is of almost perpetual recurrence in Donne's verse. It is met in *A Valediction: of my name, in the window*

Or, if too hard and deepe
This learning be, for a scratch'd name to teach,
It, as a given deaths head keepe,
Lovers mortalitie to preach,
Or thinke this ragged bony name to bee
My ruinous Anatomie.

It is heard again in *A Nocturnall Upon S. Lucies day*

Tis the yeares midnight, and it is the dayes,
Lucies, who scarce seaven houres herself unmaskes,
The Sunne is spent, and now his flasks
Send forth light squibs, no constant rayes;
The worlds whole sap is sunke:
The general balme th' hydroptique earth hath drunk,
Whither, as to the beds-feet, life is shrunke,
Dead and enterr'd; yet all these seeme to laugh,
Compar'd with mee, who am their Epitaph.

Indeed, one feels after reading Donne's lyrics that the resort to funereal imagery is the rule rather than the exception. "In whatever sunny garden and at whatever banquet Donne sits, he discerns in air the dark scythesman of that great picture attributed to Orcagna."³⁸

Beyond noting that the obsession with death is a characteristic of Donne and his contemporaries of the late Renaissance, critics have scarcely attempted to explain its prevalence. Williamson virtually epitomizes the best that has been thought and said on the phenomenon, but he too, essays no explanation of it when he writes:

There is a quality of emotion that seems to me peculiar to the Metaphysical mode of thought. This I have called the Metaphysical shudder. It is difficult to analyze, but once felt, it can never be forgotten; and it is most precisely concentrated in Donne.

In biography it is represented by Donne and his shroud. However, as T. S. Eliot so aptly remarks, "Donne and his shroud, the shroud and his motive for wearing it, are inseparable, but they are not the same thing." The shroud belonged to his time. What a place it held in that age we can see in the *Urn-Burial* of Sir Thomas Browne, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, the numerous elegies, and the sermons of the great divines. It was a time when men loved to be subtle to plague themselves with the thought of death. In this business Donne happened to be only the most subtle and individual

³⁸ Edward Dowden, "The Poetry of John Donne," *The Fortnightly Review*, O.S., Vol. LIII, (1890), p. 807.

in his poetry, and the most dramatic in his life, bringing to his own death the tragic dignity of *Death's Duell* and the shroud. Even as late as the notorious Rochester a profane poet could be plagued into a last-minute repentance by the thought of death, and the skull could mingle with the rose in the language of a Jeremy Taylor.³⁹

The one explanation which has been put forward, but which is the product and derivative of an attitude toward history (in my opinion, an essentially false attitude) rather than of critical logic, is that upon which Joan Bennet expatiates:

But the prevalence of the facts of death and disease, both in his verse and in his prose, is not only due to an intellectual interest in physiology. It is the counterpart of his delight in the life of the senses. He is as mediaeval in his insistence on the grave and the narrow margin that divides the skeleton from the living face, as he is in his scholastic delight in the processes of reasoning. His is an attitude to the body that belongs to a time when death lurked round every corner, the gift of plague, famine or violence.⁴⁰

This is of course the traditional imputation to the Middle Ages of an unrelieved preoccupation with death, a preoccupation which Miss Bennet feels the Renaissance inherited. The only adequate answer to such an affirmation is the testimony of history and of literature itself. The annals of the Crusades do not tell of defeatists who felt life thwarted and darkened by the leering presence of death. Such a tremendous outpouring of physical and spiritual energy could not have come from a civilization as negative in character as Miss Bennet's remarks casually charge it with being. The cathedrals, centuries a-building, were not conceived and executed by men possessed with the fear that tomorrow the grave would engulf them. If their meaning can be read by modern eyes, they bespeak a joyous and self-confident triumph over the fear of death. The great *romans* of the Middle Ages were not born in minds trembling in awe before the eternal threat of wormy dissolution. The *Imitation of Christ*, that strangely powerful volume which countless multitudes have found a consolation and a stay, was not written by a dour and hopeless pessimist; its primary concern is not with death, but with life. And while it is quite true, as Miss Bennet says, that "the men of the Middle Ages and of the Renaissance knew that life is but a moment . . .,"⁴¹ her linking them together through the assumption of a congenital attitude toward death is decidedly incongruous. Men

³⁹ *The Donne Tradition*, pp. 90-91.

⁴⁰ *Four Metaphysical Poets*. Cambridge: At the University Press, 1934, p. 37.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

of the Middle Ages thought of life as a fleeting moment, but as a moment in which the splendour of the Godhead was reflected mysteriously, yet palpably, in the created splendour of the universe; the dew-drenched rose, the Virgin's window at Chartres, the wonder of a woman's body, each was a symbol of that Uncreated Beauty which some day he hoped to see face to face; and if sometimes his senses ran riot and plunged him into sin, that is, into such a reversal of the divine economy that he forgot the Creator in his devotion to the creature, he did not, on perceiving his error, reject the latter entirely, but sought rather to restore it to its proper place in his cosmology.

For the man of the Renaissance on the other hand, the significance of the sacramental idealism was gone, because he had rejected all that in his sole preoccupation with the beauty of the world as it lay before him. But as the far off and shadowy splendour with which the Mediaevalist saw the universe invested faded, and the man of the Renaissance strained to regain an earlier and simpler relationship with the earth whose appeal was always speaking to his senses, he found himself strangely thwarted. That return to the "pure and primitive perceptions of the early mytho-poets" was barred forever by the intransigence of the Christian conscience. An awareness of this fact caused John Addington Symonds to write:

No amount of Greek epigrams by Strato and Meleager, nor all the Hermaphrodites and Priapi of Rome, had power to annul the law of conduct established by the founders of Christianity, and ratified by the higher instincts of the Middle Ages.⁴²

In John Donne's reaction to the dilemma with which he, as a Renaissance figure, was thus brought face to face, lies, I am convinced, the most plausible explanation of his preoccupation with death. He was, on the one hand, an artist, who could not give up his attachment to the things of sense. He had, on the other hand, rejected the mediaeval solution of the artist's most puzzling enigma. In the inescapable conflict born of the effort at an unabridged immersion in the things of sense, and the concomitant remorse of conscience which accompanied the sense revellings, was generated the feverishness and ethical unrest whereby his mind came to see a taint upon all things sensory. With his background, from indulgence to revulsion was a perfectly natural step, in taking which the agitated poet came

⁴² *The Renaissance in Italy: The Fine Arts*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1888, p. 175.

to see the chapless skull beneath the rose. This, it seems to me, is the most inward and personal explanation of his morbidity, although there were other contributing causes—the unfortunate death of his brother Henry, which could not but have cast a pall over the impressionable years of his young manhood, and the tendency toward constitutional melancholy, which is a constant threat to the hypersensitive.

Moreover, it is out of this same hopeless situation that the spirit of Puritanism in poetry is born. For as Fausset says with something more than half-truth:

To the Puritan of the seventeenth century a gulf suddenly yawned between nature and man. The old joy of the senses, the old care-free innocence of instinct was tarnished, because man had begun to be self-conscious and to exploit the material of life to his own hurt and to the disturbing of Nature's economy. He had discovered how consciously to abuse and criticize the physical impulses which before he had almost unthinkingly accepted.⁴³

In the wake of the loss of the synthesizing principle which had united the flesh and the spirit for the purposes of the artist came that coarsening of the interpretation of love between the sexes of which one becomes unpleasantly aware in the late Renaissance. Coleridge noted it in a remark on the dramatists:

Except in Shakespeare, you can find no such thing as a pure conception of wedded love in our old dramatists. In Massinger, and Beaumont and Fletcher it really is on both sides little better than sheer animal desire.⁴⁴

And like the dramatists', Donne's conception of love is earthy. The purposes of flattery might suffice to explain in *A Funerall Elegie* the line, "For marriage, though it doe not staine, doth dye," but the repetition of the same note in a sermon preached at Paul's Cross confirms the conjecture that this was Donne's normal way of thinking.

The highest degree of other love, is the love of woman; which love when it is rightly placed upon one woman, it is dignified by the apostle with the highest comparison, *Husbands love your wives, as Christ loved his church*: and God himself forbade not that this love should be great enough to change natural affection, *relinquet patrem*, (for this, a man shall leave his father) yea, to change nature itself, *caro una*, two shall be one. . . . Now, this love between man and woman, doth so much confess a satiety, as that if a woman think to hold a man long, she provides herself some other capacity,

⁴³ John Donne, *A Study in Discord*, p. 314.

⁴⁴ *Table Talk, The Complete Works*. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1868, Vol. VI, p. 445.

some other title, than merely as she is a woman: her wit, and her conversation, must continue this love; and she must be a wife, a helper; else, merely as a woman, this love must necessarily have intermissions. . . . But our love of earthly things is not so good as to be *volatilis*, apt to fly; for it is always grovelling upon the earth, and earthly objects: as in spiritual fornications, the idols are said to have ears and hear not, and eyes and see not; so in this idolatrous love of the creature, love hath wings, and flies not; it flies not upward, it never ascends to the contemplation of the Creator in the creature.⁴⁵

Moreover, Donne considered the conjugal act itself sinful:

Another quality that temptations receive from the Holy Ghost's metaphor of arrows is, *quia veloces*, because this captivity to sin, comes so swiftly, so impetuously upon us. Consider it first in our making; in the generation of our parents, we were conceived in sin; that is, they sinned in that action; so we are conceived in sin; in their sin. And in ourselves, we were submitted to sin, in that very act of generation, because then we became in part the subject of original sin.⁴⁶

Not even the judicious praise of Professor Grierson⁴⁷ can hide the tragic dualism revealed in this passage.

Here I cannot forbear a note (developed at length in the succeeding chapter) on one of the strange anomalies of critical literature. For two centuries and a half Donne has been known as the father of the "metaphysical" vogue. It was Dryden who first applied Drummond's term to him, in *A Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire*, which he dedicated to the Earl of Dorset.

You equal Donne in the variety, multiplicity, and choice of thoughts; you excel him in the manner and the words. I read you both with the same admiration, but not with the same delight. He affects the metaphysics, not only in his satires, but in his amorous verses, where nature only should reign; and perplexes the minds of the fair sex with nice speculations of philosophy, when he should engage their hearts, and entertain them with the softnesses of love.⁴⁸

What may have been casual terminology with Dryden passed into tradition when Johnson, in his criticism of Cowley, borrowed the former's phraseology and expanded the idea which it contained.⁴⁹ Vague as were the meanings which Dryden and Johnson attached to the word "metaphysical" its use has persisted and has become,

⁴⁵ Alford, *op. cit.*, Vol. VI, pp. 117-118. ⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 318.

⁴⁷ Cf. *The Poems of John Donne*, Vol. II, pp. xlvi-xlviii.

⁴⁸ *Essays of John Dryden*. Ed. by W. P. Ker. Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1900, Vol. II, p. 19.

⁴⁹ Cf. Samuel Johnson, *The Works of the English Poets*. London, 1790, Vol. I, pp. 29-30.

for the student of literature, synonymous with the name and the influence of the Dean of St. Paul's. Strange fact this, that the man who drove deep the wedge which has divided since his day, for all the purposes of art and literature, spirit from flesh, soul from body—who denied specifically and unequivocally the possibility of the reconciliation of these disparates—should have been designated by a word which, to the mediaevalists, stood for the philosopher's final and triumphant effort to weld them inseparably. For Hugo of St. Victor and for St. Thomas their metaphysics was a study of those first principles which they held eternal and immutable; principles of Being, Unity, Existence, Essence, Substance, Beauty, which found their temporal manifestation in the world of sense. For them, in a sense far more intimate than Plato's the material world was linked with "a world of intelligences." The contrast between their thought and Donne's could hardly be more complete.

For Donne there could have been no complete shaking off of the metaphysical way of thinking because the habits of a thousand years of mediaeval civilization were his immediate heritage. But it is with the new age and the new habits of thought that his deliberate sympathies must be identified. The accidents of language, the echo of a dialectical method—these and not an unfaltering grasp of the mediaeval synthesis make him a "metaphysical" poet.

CHAPTER V

THE HEART OF THE STRUGGLE

IN THE PRECEDING chapters I have attempted to indicate Donne's relation to the agitated intellectual and spiritual atmosphere which was the milieu of the men of his generation. I have pointed out that it is not in an obvious scepticism arising out of the displacement of the Ptolemaic by the Copernican astronomy (of which Courthope makes so much) but in a far subtler and deeper scepticism reaching the marrow of the poet's being that the answer to the riddle of Donne is to be found.

For there is a Donne riddle. A poetic genius of disturbing power and originality, Donne has been and continues to be, outside of those esoteric circles to whose worship, as Saintsbury remarked, his works peculiarly lend themselves, regarded as a broken, a fragmentary poet; as a forger of splendid single lines and isolated phrases who was somehow incapable of sustained accomplishment. A universal judgment is not to be lightly rejected, and yet, aside from Shakespeare, it may be doubted whether any English poet of the Renaissance has attained the heights of pure poetry oftener than he. The number of his lines which are not only quotable but which now sing and again burn their way into the reader's consciousness is astounding. There are, for example, in the whole gamut of Elizabethan lyricism, few passages which, for unpretentious felicity, for unadorned grace so seldom associated with Donne's name, surpass this couplet from the twelfth *Elegie*,

Time shall not lose our passages; the Spring
How fresh our love was in the beginning,

in which even the inversion becomes musical; or this line from the fourth *Elegie*,

I taught my silkes, their whistling to forbear,

where the sibilants, liquids, and short vowels, combine to weave their fluid magic.

If these passages exemplify that peculiar capacity of the born lyricist to combine words into haunting rhythms which open vistas to the reader's mind scarcely suggested by the words themselves,

Donne also possessed that rarer gift, of which Shakespeare is the greatest master in English, of combining in the same phrase the utmost limits of suggestion with the most vivid and realistic details. That power explains the appeal of the couplet from *The Calme*, beloved of Ben Jonson,

No use of lanthornes; and in one place lay
Feathers and dust, to day and yesterday,

as it is also the soul of the brilliant pillorying of the captain in the first of the *Satyres*,

Bright parcell gilt, with forty dead mens pay.

But to return to the love poems where Donne is most himself. I pass over the familiar opening line of the sixteenth *Elegie*,

By our first strange and fatall interview,

to come to the far more arresting forty-seventh line,

When I am gone, dreame me some happinesse.

The sensitive reader cannot forget that this line succeeds a passage marked by what Grierson calls the "strange bad taste," the "radical want of delicacy, which mars not only Donne's poems and lighter prose but even at times the sermons," but for sheer vividness of expression wherein the desolation of the lover is suggested by the simple intensity of the verb *dreame* cast into a new and striking idiom, it challenges comparison.

There are many other examples. From the twelfth *Elegie*, again, come these lines:

I will not look upon the quickning Sun,
But straight her beauty to my sense shall run;

while on a kindred theme *The Canonization* offers this desperate hyperbole:

Who did the whole worlds soule contract, and drove
Into the glasses of your eyes.

There are, too, the delicately reserved and translucently spiritual lines in *A Valediction: forbidding mourning*—

T'were prophanation of our joyes
To tell the layetie our love.

.

Dull sublunary lovers love
(Whose soule is sense) cannot admit

Absence, because it doth remove
Those things which elemented it.

But we by a love, so much refin'd,
That our selves know not what it is,
Inter-assured of the mind,
Care lesse, eyes, lips, and hands to misse.

Our two soules therefore, which are one
Though I must goe, endure not yet
A breach, but an expansion,
Like gold to avery thinnesse beate.

So long as man's heart opens to the witchery of lovely womanhood, such love verses will not seek appreciative readers in vain.

The art of this poet, too, can be at once effortless and certain. Consider how sure is the touch which, in this couplet from *The Extasie*,

All day, the same our postures were,
And wee said nothing, all the day,

saves the delightful antistrophe from artificiality by the employment of a language severly plain. Consider, too, in *The Dreame* the easy mastery with which the mounting intensity of thought and word is brought to a climax in the final quatrain of the superb second stanza:

When thou knew'st what I dreamt, when thou knew'st when
Excesse of joy would wake me, and cam'st then,
I must confesse, it could not chuse but bee
Prophane, to thinke thee any thing but thee.

By way of contrast there is the sombre majesty of Donne's charnelhouse air, best exemplified in three familiar passages. The first of these is found in *The Funerall*—

Who ever comes to shroud me, do not harme
Nor question much
That subtile wreath of haire, which crowns my arme;

the second (like the foregoing, previously quoted) is an even better known variation of the same macabre fancy in *The Relique*,—

A bracelet of bright haire about the bone;

the third, just as striking, is from *The Will*,—

And all your graces no more use shall have
Then a Sun dyall in a grave.

But if the love lyrics provide perhaps the most numerous examples of pure poetry, there are other poems of Donne not without their splendour. That strange work, *The Progresse of the Soule*, provides at least one couplet, which looms out of a background of elephantine trifling with almost Dantesque sweep and comprehensiveness:

For though through many streights, and lands I roame,
I launch at paradise, and I saile towards home.

The *Holy Sonnets*, likewise, though none too happy an achievement in their entirety, contain numerous examples of high poetic accomplishment. One of the most striking of these is the final couplet of Sonnet I:

Thy Grace may wing me to prevent his art,
And thou like Adamant draw mine iron heart.

The likening of the attraction of Divinity for the erring human heart to the action of the magnet upon iron is highly felicitous, while the laboured movement of the predominantly monosyllabic line suggests the agony involved in the tearing of that heart from its baser affections. The transmutation of the traditional silken sonnet of the Elizabethans into a lyric of highly dramatic propensities—a transmutation most often thought to have been wrought by poets of the twentieth century—is illustrated in the fine opening of Sonnet XIV:

Batter my heart, three person'd God; . . .

The common imputation to Donne and the metaphysicals of an unending search for fanciful subtleties to the detriment of the true powers of the imagination fails before the vision called up by the initial lines of Sonnet VII—

At the round earth's imagin'd corners, blow
Your trumpets, Angels, . . .

And in the ninth of those Sonnets appear the lines which Milton must have known and treasured:

. . . that tree
Whose fruit threw death on else immortall us.

Place these beside the opening lines of *Paradise Lost*,

Of Man's first disobedience, and the fruit
Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste
Brought death into the world, and all our woe,

and the resemblance both in imagery and rhythm seems too great to have been accidental.

Still, after the love lyrics, it is to the *Second Anniversarie* that the admirer of Donne turns most often for the pleasure that comes from jeweled phrasing. The metaphor of ll. 85-88 has been much admired:

Thinke then, my soule, that death is but a Groome,
Which brings a Taper to the outward roome,
Whence thou spiest first a little glimmering light,
And after brings it nearer to thy sight.

But whereas these lines have been perhaps overpraised, the same cannot be said of ll. 43-44:

These Hymnes thy issue, may encrease so long,
As till Gods great *Venite* change the song.

Yet, of all the fine things in which this poem abounds, there is nothing, I think, that for simple incisiveness of the poetic intuition, perceiving under the disguise of the commonplace and the banal the unsullied freshness of artistic truth, approaches ll. 395-396:

Nor are, (although the river keepe the name)
Yesterdaies waters, and to daies the same.

The Heraclitean figure was a favorite with Donne, most probably because he found in it a reflection of his inescapable obsession with mortality. Consequently, he repeats it, though less successfully, in the *Obsequies to the Lord Harrington*:

As bodies change, and as I do not weare
Those Spirits, humours, blood I did last yeare,
And, as if on a streame I fixe mine eye,
That drop, which I looked on, is presently
Pusht with more waters from my sight, and gone. . . .

The somewhat unhappy character of the later reworking of the figure but reflects its complete success at first occurrence.

How then has it come to pass that a poet capable of such achievements as these should be looked upon as an imperfect artist, a searcher after strange poetic creeds, a dabbler in occult poetic mysteries? The answer, I think, is, as has already been suggested, that in Donne there was a fatal division, a fatal lack of that reconciliation of a man's powers within himself, of that satisfactory synthesis of his views concerning his own relations to the universe around him, which is essential to the perfect flowering of high poetic genius. For John Donne life was a warfare, and the restlessness and feverishness which characterized much of the Renaissance activity in general

was, in his case, for particular reasons intensified a hundredfold.

The phase of that warfare with which the literary critic is basically concerned is what is commonly called his revolt against Elizabethanism. In the light of the dictum widely accepted that Donne broke deliberately and completely with the lyric traditions of his age, it is interesting to search his poetry for evidences, or the lack of them, of the elements which went into the making of the lyric called Elizabethan.

Of the pastoral note Donne has only one reflection, and that the satirical echo of Marlowe's *The Passionate Shepherd to his love*:

Come live with mee, and bee my love,
And wee will some new pleasures prove
Of golden sands, and christall brookes,
With silken lines, and silver hookes.

There will the river whispering runne
Warm'd by thy eyes, more than the Sunne.
And there the inamor'd fish will stay,
Begging themselves they may betray.

When thou wilt swimme in that live bath,
Each fish, which every channell hath,
Will amorously to thee swimme,
Gladder to catch thee, then thou him.

If thou, to be so seene, beest loath,
By Sunne, or Moone, thou darknest both,
And if my selfe have leave to see,
I need not their light, having thee.

Let others freeze with angling reeds,
And cut their legges, with shells and weeds,
Or treacherously poore fish beset,
With strangling snare, or windowie net:

Let coarse bold hands, from slimy nest
The bedded fish in banks out-wrest,
Or curious traitors, sleevesilke flies
Bewitch poore fishes wandring eyes.

For thee, thou needst no such deceit,
For thou thy selfe art thine owne bait;
That fish, that is not catch'd thereby,
Alas, is wiser farre then I.

Of Petrarchianism, with its gallantry and devotion, its whole-souled admiration, and its credo of eternal trust and faithfulness, he is openly and fiercely scornful as in his *Song*:

If thou beest borne to strange sights,
 Things invisible to see,
 Ride ten thousand daies and nights,
 Till age snow white haire on thee,
 Thou, when thou retorn'st, wilt tell mee
 All strange wonders that befell thee,
 And sweare
 No where
 Lives a woman true, and faire.

Or in this opening of *The triple Foole*:

I am two fooles, I know,
 For loving, and for saying so
 In whining Poëtry.

In *Confined Love* he asserts the legitimacy of free love:

Are Sunne, Moone, or Starres by law forbidden,
 To smile where they list, or lend away their light?
 Are birds divorc'd, or are they chidden
 If they leave their mate, or lie abroad a night?
 Beasts do no joyntures lose
 Though they new lovers choose,
 But we are made worse then those.

And in *Loves exchange* he breaks out in defiance against the tyranny of love itself:

Love, any devill else but you,
 Would for a given Soule give something too.

But if these and many other protests are, because of their very novelty, widely known and accepted as Donne's answer to the claims of Petrarchianism, there are other passages, almost as numerous and certainly no less poetic in which he writes as any Sidney, or Daniel, or Constable might have done. Consider, for example, the adoring mood, the grave reticence, of his sonnet, *The Token*:

Send me some token, that my hope may live,
 Or that my easelesse thoughts may sleep and rest;
 Send me some honey to make sweet my hive,
 That in my passion I may hope the best.
 I beg no ribbond wrought with thine own hands,
 To knit our loves in the fantastick straine
 Of new-tought youth; nor Ring to shew the stands
 Of our affection, that as that's round and plaine,
 So should our loves meet in simplicity;
 No, nor the Coralls which thy wrist infold,
 Lac'd up together in congruity,

To shew our thoughts should rest in the same hold;
 No, nor thy picture, though most gracious,
 And most desir'd, because best like the best;
 Nor witty Lines, which are most copious,
 Within the Writings which thou hast address.

Send me nor this, nor that, t'increase my store,
 But swear thou thinkst I love thee, and no more.

Or the sweetly sentimental and abundantly melodious strains of
 another *Song*:

Sweetest love, I do not goe,
 For wearinesse of thee,
 Nor in hope the world can show
 A fitter Love for mee;
 But since that I
 Must dye at last, 'tis best,
 To use my selfe in jest
 Thus by fain'd deaths to dye;

Yesternight the Sunne went hence,
 And yet is here to day,
 He hath no desire nor sense,
 Nor halfe so short a way:
 Then feare not mee,
 But beleve that I shall make
 Speedier journeyes, since I take
 More wings and spurres then hee.

O how feeble is mans power,
 That if good fortune fall,
 Cannot adde another houre,
 Nor a lost houre recall!
 But come bad chance,
 And wee joyne to it our strength,
 And wee teach it art and length,
 It selfe o'r us to advance.

When thou sigh'st, thou sigh'st not winde,
 But sigh'st my soule away,
 When thou weep'st, unkindly kind,
 My lifes blood doth decay.
 It cannot bee
 That thou lov'st mee, as thou say'st,
 If in thine my life thou waste,
 Thou art the best of mee.

Let not thy divining heart
 Forethinke me any ill,

Destiny may take thy part,
 And may thy feares fulfill;
 But thinke that wee
 Are but turn'd aside to sleepe;
 They who one another keepe
 Alive, ne'r parted bee.

The gay, lilting music stiffened by overtones of bitter-sweet, the honest reverence of the lover paying his devoirs from the cloisters of the outer court, the troubled awareness that before the black magic of Time the lustrous cheek fades and the brightest eye dims—these notes which came in with Wyatt and passed with the last of the Cavaliers are as much the essence of these poems of Donne's as they are of those of any Lodge or Lovelace of them all.

Of Donne's rejection of the Platonic element, as commonly reflected in Elizabethan song, scant evidence need be forthcoming; this is one of the first aspects of his poetry with which the student becomes acquainted. Yet Donne's anti-Platonism was far from complete. The confession of a struggle toward the Platonic placidity appears in that controversial poem, *The Extasie*:

This Extasie doth unperplex
 (We said) and tell us what we love,
 Wee see by this, it was not sexe,
 Wee see, we saw not what did move:
 But as all severall soules containe
 Mixture of things, they know not what,
 Love, these mixt soules, doth mixe againe,
 And makes both one, each this and that.

It occurs again in the final stanzas of *The Relique*:

First, we lov'd well and faithfully,
 Yet knew not what wee lov'd, nor why,
 Difference of sex no more wee knew,
 Then our Guardian Angells doe;
 Comming and going, wee
 Perchance might kisse, but not between those meales;
 Our hands ne'r toucht the seales,
 Which nature, injur'd by late law, sets free:
 These miracles wee did; but now alas,
 All measure, and all language, I should passe,
 Should I tell what a miracle shee was.

But the fullest treatment of the neo-Platonic *motif* is in the ninth *Elegie*, which, like *The Relique* (in all probability), was inspired by his friendship for Mrs. Herbert:

No *Spring*, nor *Summer* Beauty hath such grace,
 As I have seen in one *Autumnal* face.
 Yong *Beauties* force our love, and that's a *Rape*,
 This doth but *counsaille*, yet you cannot scape.
 If t'were a *shame* to love, here t'were no *shame*,
Affection here takes *Reverences* name.
 Were her first yeares the *Golden Age*; That's true,
 But now shee's *gold* oft tried, and ever new.
 That was her torrid and inflaming time,
 This is her tolerable *Tropique clyme*.
 Faire eyes, who askes more heate then comes from hence,
 He in a fever wishes pestilence.
 Call not these wrinkles, *graves*; if *graves* they were,
 They were *Loves graves*; for else he is no where.
 Yet lies not Love *dead* here, but here doth sit
 Vow'd to this trench, like an *Anachorit*.
 And here, till hers, which must be his *death*, come,
 He doth not digge a *Grave*, but build a *Tombe*,
 Here dwells he, though he sojourn ev'ry where,
 In *Progresse*, yet his standing house is here.
 Here, where still *Evening* is; not *noone*, nor *night*;
 Where no *voluptuousnesse*, yet all *delight*.

Finally, in relating Donne to the Elizabethan tradition, there must be considered his attitude toward that erotic element in sixteenth and seventeenth century English lyric verse which derived chiefly from Catullus, Horace, and Ovid. As in the matter of Donne's anti-Platonism, the prevailing opinion is firmly fixed. The casual reader of his poems comes away with the impression that the English poet not only rivals Catullus in his audacity and levity but surpasses him in intenseness; that whereas Ovid is most often playing with the burnt-out embers of licentious fancy, "Jack" Donne, the courtier of the emancipated conscience, is moved to poetic expression only by the wild turmoil of authentic emotions. To those who hold this view Donne is the most pagan of the pagans. Yet while the widespread prevalence of this conception is easily understood, it is not based on fact. It is true, as Bredvold says, that Donne in his early verse "substituted for the Stoic Nature a different nature with its own Goddess—Aphrodite Pandemos."¹ Yet the careful reader will feel that the soul of Donne was not at ease in such daring poems as *The Apparition*, *The Flea*, or *Loves diet*. Compare these

¹ "The Religious Thought of Donne in Relation to Medieval and Later Traditions," *Studies in Shakespeare, Milton, and Donne*. New York and London: Macmillan Company, 1925, University of Michigan Publications, Language and Literature. Vol. I, p. 200.

with all their vaunted naughtiness to Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* or Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* and a vast difference is at once evident. Not only is the sensual appeal of the older poets far bolder and freer, but, in addition, they seem far less aware of any moral scruples. Donne's celebration of passion, on the other hand, is never free from a sense of guilt. There is something so laborious, so self-conscious, about his affirmations of libertinism that one infers they are not quite successful attempts to conceal an inner uneasiness.

The revolt of Donne against the Elizabethan tradition, then, is not merely a blind assault which accelerated the dissolution of a living art already pointed toward a rapid decline. On the contrary, his protest was deliberate and rational; item by item, he analyzed the Elizabethan glory, and one by one, in the manner of an *advocatus diaboli*, he delivered his indictments. But the indictments are never wholly such. They become at times, if imitation and the frank reflection of now one and now another aspect of the Elizabethan spirit be any proof, open eulogies. For in his art, as in his life, Donne was never quite certain of his objectives, never quite satisfied with his direction. Earlier chapters of this work have been devoted to an exposition of two problems which, it seems to me, suggest the answer to the Donne riddle. The first of these problems grows out of Donne's relation to Roman Catholicism and to Anglicanism; the second arises from his reaction against the Thomistic aesthetic. And yet while these problems are separate and distinct they have an essential unity. It is by his rejection of Roman Catholicism and his flight from the Thomistic aesthetic, that Donne formally transfers his allegiance from the mediaeval ideology in which he was born to the Renaissance ideology which dominated the western world at his death. And in England Donne is himself a convenient symbol of the transference of allegiances from the old to the new.

To some men it is given, happily, or unhappily, to live their lives at focal points in human history where converging streams of cultural tendency meet and mingle contradictorily before breaking into the new channels which they are to follow for the ensuing epoch. Such was the fate of John Donne. For with Donne the true mediaeval note, so far as the main current of English literature is concerned, disappears. It will reappear, fitfully, in Crashaw in the generation succeeding Donne's and then not again until the emergence of Patmore and Thompson near the end of the nineteenth century, but in the latter pair it will be an exotic, a strange and quasi-foreign

growth which will attract or repel largely because of its novelty. Pre-Raphaelitism was only an abortive attempt to recapture its spirit by men so far removed from its sources that they mistook its external trappings for its inner reality.

The history of Donne's tortuous religious course serves as a prelude to the artistic conflict, which if there be any validity in the view I have taken of him, lies at the heart of his poetry. His wavering and uncertainty—his outward rejection of the claims of Rome and his patent confession of his inability to find a sense of security elsewhere—I have already alluded to in the sketch of his life and times. That confession of spiritual strain is to be traced, it will be recalled, over a long period of years. Its earliest manifestation was in the revealing lines of the early third *Satyre*:

Seeke true religion. O where? Mirreus
Thinking her unhous'd here, and fled from us,
Seekes her at Rome; there, because hee doth know
That she was there a thousand yeares agoe,
He loves her ragges so, as wee here obey
The statecloth where the Prince sate yesterday.
Crantz to such brave Loves will not be intrall'd
But loves her onely, who at Geneva is call'd
Religion, plaine, simple, sullen, yong,
Contemptuous yet unhansome; As among
Lecherous humours, there is one that judges
No wenches wholesome, but course country drudges.
Graius stayes still at home here, and because
Some Preachers, vile ambitious bauds, and lawes
Still new like fashions, bid him thinke that shee
Which dwels with us, is onely perfect, hee
Imbraceth her, whom his Godfathers will
Tender to him, being Tender, as Wards still
Take such wives as their Guardians offer, or
Pay valewes. Carelesse Phrygius doth abhorre
All, because all cannot be good, as one
Knowing some women whores, dares marry none.
Graccus loves all as one, and thinkes that so
As women do in divers countries goe
In divers habits, yet are still one kinde,
So doth, so is Religion; and this blind-
nesse too much light breeds; but unmoved thou
Of force must one, and forc'd but one allow;
And the right; aske thy father which is shee,
Let him aske his; though truth and falshood bee
Neare twins, yet truth a little elder is;

Be busie to seeke her, believe mee this,
 He is not of none, nor worst, that seekes the best.
 To adore or scorne an image, or protest,
 May all be bad; doubt wisely; in strange way
 To stand inquiring right, is not to stray;
 To sleepe, or runne wrong is. On a huge hill,
 Cragged and steep, Truth stands, and hee that will
 Reach her, about must and about must goe;
 And what the hills suddennes resists, winne so;
 Yet strive so, that before age, deaths twilight,
 Thy Soule rest, for none can worke in that night.

Certainly the often-quoted final lines of this passage, however much they abound in felicitously-phrased platitudes, are far from revealing a position of religious certitude.

The uneasiness here revealed continues to reflect itself in subsequent works. *The Litanie*, composed in 1609, with its Catholic devotion to the Virgin Mary, to the Confessors, and to the Virgins, shows the continuance in Donne of the appeal of the old faith, while the eighteenth of the *Holy Sonnets*² exhibits the same lingering attachment. Gosse, who noted in Donne this ineradicable longing for the Roman Catholic creed and who suspected that he found a secret sympathizer in Lord Doncaster, thought it

... not unworthy of notice that by a special direction, he bequeathed to that nobleman a picture of the Blessed Virgin Mary, which, until the last days of his life, hung in his private dining-room in the Deanery of St. Paul's. In the early seventeenth century, in England, such pictures were appreciated for their subject more and for their artistic merit less than has since become the fashion. Donne would not have kept for ever before his eyes in privacy, and have passed on to Lord Doncaster (then Earl of Carlisle) as a peculiar treasure, a painting of the Virgin Mary, unless they had both preserved a tender interest in her cult, and were equally out of sympathy with the iconoclastic puritanism of the age of England.³

It is interesting to compare with Gosse's comment a statement aimed at the refutation of Gosse by Dr. Itrat Husain in his recent apology for Donne's Anglicanism:

But the invocation of the Virgin Mary does not mean that Donne believed in the Roman Catholic view of the position of the Virgin Mary as embodied in the Roman Breviary (approved at the Council of Trent), which says:

"Hail, O Queen, Mother of Mercy, Hail,
 Our life, our sweetness, our hope!
 To thee we fly, the banished sons of Eve."

² *Vide supra*, p. 43.

³ Gosse, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 110.

The fundamental position of the Protestant Churches was that they insisted that salvation could be attained through faith in Christ alone, and although they accepted His birth of a pure Virgin, and the honour due to the Virgin Mary as the Mother of God, they held that the soul should come to Christ direct without the intercession of the Virgin Mary or the Saints.

Donne rejected the Roman Catholic view that the Virgin Mary had any definite part in our Redemption, as Eve had in our Fall.

"But God forbid any should say, that the Virgin Mary concurred to our good, so, as Eve did to our ruine . . . it cannot be said . . . that by one woman innocence entered, and life: The Virgin Mary had not the same interest in our salvation, as Eve had in our destruction: nothing that she did entered into that treasure, that ransom that redeem'd us."⁴

As to the quotation from the sermon which Dr. Husain uses to bolster his position, no one would question that here, as in the much earlier *Ignatius his Conclave* and the *Pseudo-Martyr*, Donne formally ranges himself with Anglicanism and opposes Rome. But in his pulpit efforts and controversial writings where he was a party to a contention, what else could he do? Consequently, it is not there that inconsistencies are to be looked for but rather in works and at moments when controversy drops into the background and the poet, unpanoplied, faces the questionings of his inner self. No amount of reasoned apology, no fecundity of quotation from more satisfactory writings can save the defender of Donne's Anglicanism from a grave disconcertion engendered by the expression of such sentiments in poems separated by such wide periods of time.

The history of Donne's religious vacillation serves, I have said, as a prelude to the artistic conflict which is the heart of his mystery. Possessed of a mind which inclined strongly toward both the authoritarian and the dogmatic (there is scarcely a page of the sermons which does not reveal those traits) Donne's tortured attempts at self-conviction in the authenticity of the Anglican position are contradicted by the recurring expressions of doubt in his letters and poems. Even the bitterness of his invectives against Rome, repeated in the manner of one arousing himself to a deliberate frenzy, is inverted proof of the disquiet which afflicted his inner self.

Thus in the most central and intimate sphere of man's life, wherein the human soul, naked and alone, ponders its eternal destiny, Donne gives eloquent testimony to the shattering of the mediaeval unity—to the end of the centripetal tendencies of the past thousand years,

⁴ Itrat Husain, *The Dogmatic and Mystical Theology of John Donne*. London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1938, pp. 66-67.

and the beginning of the centrifugal processes which were to be the touchstones not only of the Renaissance but of modern times as well. Those contrifugal tendencies were not long reflecting themselves in the realm of art. Numerous commentators, Courthope among them, have noted the lack of unity⁵ in Donne's conception of nature and his generally isolative treatment of details which is one phase of the break with the mediaeval tradition. A much more important result of the break with that mediaeval aesthetic which alone could have supplied, for him, a basis for the reconciliation of those eternal dispartes, flesh and spirit, was that it placed him in the unenviable position of choosing between the rival claims of the thoroughly secular humanism of the late sixteenth century and the claims of a religious philosophy in which the more gracious and lovely elements of human existence were continually exposed to the attacks of a rising Puritanism. It was an unhappy position for a poet. Professor Grierson has expressed his belief

... that the conflict between the spirit or temper of the Renaissance and that of the Reformation, seen in its full power in the fanaticism of English Puritanism, had affected our literature in a deeper and more complex manner than our historians had always made quite clear; that it had ... limited the range and fullness of Shakespeare's dramatic achievement, taking Shakespeare as the greatest of the Elizabethan dramatists. ... And if Shakespeare was thus consciously or unconsciously, confined, limited by the character and ideals of his audience, another result of the same conflict was that the genius of Milton was narrowed, his temper embittered; he was to some extent soured and thwarted.⁶

But more strikingly, I believe, than even Milton and certainly than Shakespeare is Donne an exemplar of the "divided mind" of the time; the sense of torque and twist which is always evident in his poetry is to be traced to the collision between these irreconcilable forces.

In his own reiterated statements I have pointed out the evidences of Donne's rejection of the mediaeval aesthetic traditions and this rejection, it will scarcely be denied, represents his final judgment in the matter. Yet the break was not a painless one, nor was it ever quite perfectly accomplished. In the history of western culture the end of the Middle Ages cannot be indicated by any one year or by any one decade. Instead, the mediaeval and the renaissance cur-

⁵ Cf. *A History of English Poetry*, Vol. III, p. 18.

⁶ *Cross-Currents in English Literature of the XVIIth Century*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1929, pp. ix-x.

rents flow side by side, like confluent rivers and for long it is difficult to tell whether the one or the other predominates. In the vivid idiom of an outstanding modern critic of the Renaissance in Italy:

... the Middle Ages and the Renaissance interplay for long with dramatic and amazing consequences. Joan of Arc, that flower of mediaevalism, is not burned till 1430, while Catherine of Siena, a thoroughly Renaissance woman in her intellectual passion and her love of beautiful youth, is born in 1380. The *Summa* of Thomas Aquinas colours the web of literature till the times of the late Renaissance. Aeneas Sylvius anxiously hopes for a Crusade till 1464; Bayard, a protagonist of medieval chivalry, does not die until 1524.⁷

That interplay of two conflicting streams of thought can be better studied in the individual than in the age, for the life of man is short and the conflicts and contradictions of a disturbed time are reflected more sharply and violently in the man than in the epoch. Particularly in this true of Donne for—

The true Renaissance dualism cleft him through and through—cleft, perhaps, where, in others it mingled. He was mediaeval and modern, he was schoolman and scholar, he was lover and hater, he was mystic and materialist, he was the apologist of suicide, and died as the Dean of St. Paul's.⁸

It is to the love poems, of course, that one turns to catch the echoes of now the mediaeval and now the renaissance overtones. I have already called attention to the Petrarchian note in Donne's lyrics. Still, Petrarchianism is already inhaling the odours of the Renaissance. But a deeper recollection of the older age, far more exemplative of the true mediaeval spirit, is to be found in the Dantesque reverence for womanhood voiced in the seventeenth of the *Holy Sonnets*:

Since she whom I lov'd hath payd her last debt
To Nature, and to hers, and my good is dead,
And her Soule early into heaven ravished,
Wholly on heavenly things my mind is sett.
Here the admyring her my mind did whett
To seeke thee God; so streames do shew their head;
But though I have found thee, and thou my thirst hast fed,
A holy thirsty dropsy melts mee yett.
But why should I begg more Love, when as thou
Dost woee my soule for hers; offring all thine:
And dost not only feare least I allow
My Love to Saints and Angels things divine,

⁷ Rachel Annand Taylor, *Aspects of the Italian Renaissance*. Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1923, p. 26.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 287.

But in thy tender jealousy dost doubt
Least the World, Fleshe, yea Devill putt thee out.

It would be difficult to find a more definite reflection of the sacramental ideal in English love poetry than that in the lines

Here the admyring her my mind did whett
To seke thee God. . . .

So far as I know, there is no other place in Donne's poetry where this particular idea is expressed.

Beside this perfect example of a dominant mode of thinking in mediaeval love poetry should be placed a stanza from *Lovers infinitenesse* in which the transition from the mediaeval to the renaissance manner is patent:

If yet I have not all thy love,
Deare, I shall never have it all,
I cannot breathe one other sigh, to move
Nor can intreat one other teare to fall,
And all my treasure, which should purchase thee,
Sighs, teares, and oathes, and letters I have spent.
Yet no more can be due to mee,
Then at the bargaine made was ment,
If then thy gift of love were partiall,
That some to mee, some should to others fall,
Deare, I shall never have Thee all.

Here is Petrarchian gallantry with an added note of intensity occasioned by the sublime paradox which man faces when confronted with a great love, the paradox that he can never entirely possess his beloved—or rather that he would not, for love contracted to finiteness loses its transcendental character. Two centuries and a half later a nineteenth century poet was to handle the same challenging theme:

Why, having won her, do I woo?
Because her spirit's vestal grace
Provokes me always to pursue,
But, spirit-like, eludes embrace;
.
Because though free of the outer court
I am, this Temple keeps its shrine
Sacred to heaven; because in short,
She's not, and never can be mine.

Donne's verses lack the spirituality of Patmore's—there is far more of the desire of Catullus than of the aspiration of Dante in his thought

—but the truth which all lovers who love beyond the body appreciate is there.

But for the most part, I am convinced, Donne does not wrestle with the problem of the reconciliation of the sensual and the spiritual. Professor Grierson thinks *The Extasie* represents such a striving, although a not quite satisfactory one.⁹ And Merritt Y. Hughes, in deftly tracing the traditional sources of the significant ideas expressed in the poem,¹⁰ has agreed with the former. In opposition is Pierre Legouis' blunt statement that in this poem, "Donne does not set to solve once for all the difficult problem of the relations between soul and body in love."¹¹ Whether or not the poem is dramatically conceived as M. Legouis thinks strikes me as inconsequential (although, as M. Legouis notes, Donne had a faculty for dramatizing himself in his poetry), but with his interpretation of the thought of the poem I am in complete accord. The passing from the description of the platonic relationship to the plea for the body's indulgence should not, I think, be considered in isolation but in conjunction with other of Donne's love poems whereupon its cynical nature becomes evident.¹² Most often he is either the complete sensualist, or he is the uncompromising denier of sense, attempting no fusion of the two points of view. This fact has been noted by a recent editor of the *Devotions*:

There are two ways of arriving at the pitch of emotion necessary for the production of such writings as Donne's. One is the absolute surrender to pleasure, and the sacrifice of the ordinary standard of morals; the other is the complete banishment of pleasure, and the consistent living up to an ideal. Donne adopted both of these.¹³

Needless to say, it is the former of these moods which is more frequent in Donne, and it is the prevalence of this fleshly coloring in his poetry which has been responsible for a certain kind of popularity

⁹ *The Poems of John Donne*. Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1912. Vol. II, p. xlvii. Cf. Mario Praz: "In verità anche nelle poesie 'platoniche' del Donne ricorrono accenti che sconcertano l'interprete. Nell' *Estasi*, ad esempio, il contrasto tra la macchinosa argomentazione metafisica e il pratico realismo della perorazione potrebbe per un momento sembrar quasi la trovata d'uno spirito burlesco, se non ci richiamasse all' ingenua accettazione del senso letterale quel che il poeta dichiara altrove." *Secentismo e Marinismo in Inghilterra*. Firenze, 1925, p. 27.

¹⁰ "The Lineage of 'The Extasie'," *Modern Language Review*, Vol. XXVII (1932), pp. 1-5.

¹¹ *Donne the Craftsman*. Paris: Henri Didier, 1928, p. 68.

¹² The traditionalism of Donne's thought which both Professor Grierson and Hughes stress can be readily admitted without denying Donne the privilege of toying facetiously with that tradition. Such handling of tradition is a common thing with Donne.

¹³ *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions*. Ed. by John Sparrow. Cambridge: At the University Press, 1923, p. xii.

(particularly is much of his current vogue due to a *succès de scandale*), but which has also been responsible in large part for the verdict of incompleteness and fragmentariness which every age has passed upon him. For Donne was guilty, as Arthur Symonds says, of "the heresy of the realist":

For the writing of great poetry something more is needed than to be a poet and to have great occasions. Donne was a poet, and he had the passions and the passionate adventures, in body and mind, which make the material for poetry; he was sincere to himself in expressing what he really felt under the burden of strong emotion and sharp sensation. Almost every poem that he wrote is written on a genuine inspiration, a genuine personal inspiration, but most of his poems seem to have been written before that personal inspiration had had time to fuse itself with the poetic inspiration. It is always useful to remember Wordsworth's phrase of "emotion recollected in tranquillity," for nothing so well defines that moment of crystallization in which direct emotion or sensation deviates exquisitely into art. Donne is intent on the passion itself, the thought, the reality; so intent that he is not at the same time, in that half-unconscious way which is the way of the really great poet, equally intent on the form, that both may come to ripeness together. Again it is the heresy of the realist. Just as he drags into his verse words that have had no time to take colour from men's association of them with beauty, so he puts his "naked thinking heart" into verse as if he were setting forth an argument. He gives us the real thing, as he would have been proud to assure us. But poetry will have nothing to do with real things, until it has translated them into a diviner world.¹⁴

This judgment of Symonds is confirmed by Belloc's critical generalization, "The greatest verse calls up the strongest emotion in the reader, but in the writer it is a distillation not a cry."¹⁵

Specifically, I think, the result of that over-emphasis on the sensual in Donne's poetry was twofold: it has made him, with all his boasted "realism," one of the most superficial of love-poets; likewise it has superinduced that terrible melancholy which flowered in the death's-head fancies earlier alluded to and which, steadily deepening until its climax in the "shroud" episode, became the hallmark of the later Dean as flippancy and impudence had been of "Jack" Donne. On the first of these consequences, Mrs. Simpson's pronouncement is straightforward and unequivocal: "Few great writers have shown so little insight into the secrets of a woman's heart, and yet few have been more dependent on the friendship and sympathy of women."¹⁶ The task which Donne posed in his love poetry involves the recurring

¹⁴ "John Donne," *Figures of Several Centuries*. London: Constable and Company, Ltd., 1916, pp. 104-105. ¹⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. 128. ¹⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 62.

paradox of attainment through renunciation which, had he known them more intimately, the mediaeval mystics might have taught him at a saving of much subsequent expense of spirit. But the epoch in which Donne lived was one far from congenial to the mystically inclined. It was an age primarily of scepticism and secondarily of naturalism, and where these two prevail (despite the triplicate union predicated by Williamson) mysticism declines. For these are, in their essence, antagonistic to mysticism, which is born of faith and which sees in nature the cloudless shadow of the supernatural. Not in England alone but on the continent, not in Protestant lands only, but in Roman Catholic as well, a spirit was abroad in Donne's time which would have none of mysticism. As the framework of a decadent scholasticism was shivered and rent in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, mysticism retreated from the market-place and the broad highway to find harborage in the breast of an occasional poet or saint. That Donne had glimpses of the mystic vision there can be no doubt. That he was fain to cling to the mystic creed one may well believe. But he was of his age and his attempt to reconcile mysticism and its disparates was bound to end in the rejection of the former and the glorification of the latter. The mode which became characteristic of Donne has been noted by Mrs. Taylor:

With this strange satiric code of language, he dissects as with fine steel the curious throbbing matter of the heart. Surrey and Wyatt had sounded with their new metres a new intimacy of lyric expression. Sidney and Shakespeare had, amongst others, carried it far. Donne, with his singular blend of cynicism and passion, seems to subject the secret soul to absolute violation. With ironies already too much aware, with slow intolerable pressure he compels the consciousness to divulge its secrets, as flowers yield their fragrance in the still.¹⁷

What Mrs. Taylor fails to note is that spiritual cabinets do not open to the pressure of fleshly fingers, and that the violated inner sanctities of the soul mock the violator by turning to ashes at his touch. Burns has testified to the effect of this searching of the heart's secrets by the ways of lust,¹⁸ and Byron has studded a hundred pages with admissions of defeat, to mention only two; but it is not the judgment of poets only but of universal mankind that

Life's all externals unto those
Who pluck the blushing petals off,
To find the secret of the rose.

¹⁷ *Op. cit.*, pp. 287-288.

¹⁸ Cf. *Epistle to a Young Friend*.

In an earlier chapter I have alluded to the contradiction which is involved in the designation of Donne's poetry and the poetic manner which he fathered by the term metaphysical. [No single word in the English language is more redolent of mediaeval associations than is the word *metaphysical*. Like the Greeks from whom they inherited the term, but in a manner peculiar to themselves, the mediaevalists were intent on linking the world of sense and the unseen world of spirit with the chains, now ponderous and now light as gossamer, of philosophic speculation. Theirs was an age of synthesis and they were not content until the last isolated phenomenon had been incorporated into the conceptual whole. But the age of the English metaphysicals was an age in which the mediaeval system-makers were held up to scorn, and the patterns of thought which they had fashioned were discarded. The result was the introduction of a certain tantalizing confusion into the deeper and subtler minds of the time a confusion which was reflected in scepticism and cynicism and philosophic anarchy. Donne perhaps more than any other Elizabethan reveals this troubled state of affairs, but even the casual reader of Shakespeare has frequently been startled by its manifestation.]

That Donne was not a metaphysical poet in the full sense of that word Professor Grierson has not hesitated to insist.¹⁹ Indeed, is it not the lack rather than the possession of a "unified and illumined" conception of life which makes English metaphysical poetry fundamentally what it is? And of its obvious characteristics,²⁰ how ironical that

¹⁹ "Metaphysical Poetry, in the full sense of the term, is a poetry which, like that of the *Divina Commedia*, the *De Natura Rerum*, perhaps Goethe's *Faust*, has been inspired by a philosophical conception of the universe and the role assigned to the human spirit in the great drama of existence. These poems were written because a definite interpretation of the riddle, the atoms of Epicurus rushing through infinite empty space, the theology of the schoolmen as elaborated in the catechetical disquisitions of St. Thomas, Spinoza's vision of life *sub specie aeternitatis*, beyond good and evil, laid hold on the mind and the imagination of a great poet, unified and illumined his comprehension of life, intensified and heightened his personal consciousness of joy and sorrow, of hope and fear, by broadening their significance, revealing to him in the history of his own soul a brief abstract of the drama of human destiny. 'Poetry is the first and last of all knowledge—it is as immortal as the hearts of man.' Its themes are the simplest experiences of the surface of life, sorrow and joy, love and battle, the peace of the country, the bustle and the stir of towns, but equally the boldest conceptions, the profoundest intuitions, the subtlest and most complex classifications and 'discourses of reason,' if into these too the poet can 'carry sensation,' make of them passionate experiences communicable in vivid and moving imagery, in rich and varied harmonies." *Metaphysical Lyrics & Poems of The Seventeenth Century, Donne to Butler*. Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1921, p. xiii.

²⁰ "... the reaccentuation of the metaphysical strain, the *concetti metafisici ed ideali* as Testi calls them in contrast to the simpler imagery of classical poetry, of mediaeval Italian poetry; the more intellectual, less verbal character of their wit compared with the conceits of the Elizabethans; the finer psychology of which their conceits are often the expression; their learned imagery; the argumentative, subtle evolution of their lyrics; above all the peculiar blend of passion and thought, feeling and ratiocination. . . ." *Ibid.*, pp. xv-xvi.

the one which should give this school of poetry its name should be an Italian (perhaps better, Provençal) inheritance, and hence not peculiar to it. The irony is heightened, moreover, by the fact that the metaphysical conceits, whose origin is mediaeval, should commonly be taken as a basic designation of a genus of poetry which was both consciously and unconsciously breaking with all things mediaeval. For it was out of the basic conflict of the seventeenth century, of which metaphysical poetry is one reflection, that the very word *meta-physical* and all that it implies came into disrepute. My own view is that the metaphysical strain, properly so-called, in this poetry—the insistence on a basic unity underlying apparent diversity, on the reality of a centripetal agency directing apparent casualty to a definite purpose—is an anachronism, a lingering token of an age already passing; its really distinguishing qualities, the increased intellectualism, the subtle thought, the introspection, but above all the “peculiar blend of passion and thought” are the product of that travail of spirit which went on in such minds as Donne’s when the fairness of earthly beauty spoke to the senses, when pagan humanism eloquently announced its charms, while of the great mediaeval synthesis only the uneasy recollection of the “mystical and metaphysical cloud” remained—strong enough to *poison delight* but now too weak to reconcile the conflicting claims of flesh and spirit.

Now of these distinguishing characteristics the seminal one from which the others stem is the “peculiar blend of passion and thought.” Professor Grierson himself, whose phrase it is, adds this further commentary:

A metaphysical, a philosophical poet, to the degree to which even his contemporary Fulke Greville might be called such, Donne was not. The thought in his poetry is not his primary concern but the feeling. No scheme of thought, no interpretation of life, becomes for him a complete and illuminating experience. The central theme of his poetry is ever his own intense personal moods, as a lover, a friend, an analyst of his own experiences worldly and religious. His philosophy cannot unify these experiences.²¹

T. S. Eliot, after contrasting Lord Herbert’s *Ode* with a poem of Tennyson’s, writes:

The difference is not a simple difference of degree between poets. It is something which had happened to the mind of England between the time of Donne or Lord Herbert of Cherbury and the time of Tennyson and Browning; it is the difference between the intellectual poet and the reflective

²¹ *Metaphysical Lyrics & Poems of the Seventeenth Century, Donne to Butler*, p. xxviii.

poet. Tennyson and Browning are poets, and they think; but they do not feel their thought as immediately as the odour of a rose. A thought to Donne was an experience; it modified his sensibility. When a poet's mind is perfectly equipped for its work, it is constantly amalgamating disparate experience; the ordinary man's experience is chaotic, irregular, fragmentary. The latter falls in love or reads Spinoza, and these two experiences have nothing to do with each other, or with the noise of the typewriter or the smell of cooking; in the mind of the poet these experiences are always forming new wholes.

We may express the difference by the following theory: The poets of the seventeenth century, the successors of the dramatists of the sixteenth, possessed a mechanism of sensibility which could devour any kind of experience. They are simple, artificial, difficult, or fantastic, as their predecessors were; no less nor more than Dante, Guido Cavalcanti, Guinicelli, or Cino. In the seventeenth century a dissociation of sensibility set in, from which we have never recovered; and this dissociation, as is natural, was aggravated by the influence of the two most powerful poets of the century, Milton and Dryden.²²

And Williamson, who makes much of the "sensuous thinking" in Donne, notes the disappearance of this quality from English poetry after the seventeenth century.

Much as this sensuous thinking may seem an essential of all poetry, there has been little of it and its source, a unified sensibility, in English poetry since the seventeenth century. Keats was working toward it in his second *Hyperion*.²³

There is a definite reason, I believe, for the sensuous thinking in Donne and for its disappearance from the main stream of English literature after his time. For Donne is, paradoxically, the English poet in whom the apotheosis of sensuous thinking is reached, while at the same time the validity of such thought is denied.

It is not accidental that in all Donne's love poetry, with the exception of the coarsely vulgar *Elegies XVII* and *XVIII*, there is no description of the physical charms of the beloved. In such a magnificent outburst of lyric fervor as *The Dreame* one looks in vain for a hint of the beauty which awakens such emotion.

Deare love, for nothing lesse then thee
 Would I have broke this happy dreame,
 It was a theame
 For reason, much too strong for phantasie,
 Therefore thou wakd'st me wisely; yet
 My Dreame thou brok'st not, but continued'st it,

²² T. S. Eliot, *Selected Essays 1917-1932*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1932, p. 247.

²³ *The Donne Tradition*, p. 25.

Thou art so truth, that thoughts of thee suffice,
 To make dreames truths; and fables histories;
 Enter these armes, for since thou thoughtst it best,
 Not to dreame all my dreame, let's act the rest.

As lightning, or a Tapers light,
 Thine eyes, and not thy noise wak'd mee;

Yet I thought thee

(For thou lovest truth), an Angell, at first sight,
 But when I saw thou sawest my heart,
 And knew'st my thoughts, beyond an Angels art,
 When thou knew'st what I dreamt, when thou knew'st when
 Excesse of joy would wake me, and cam'st then,
 I must confesse, it could not chuse but bee
 Prophane, to thinke thee any thing but thee.

Comming and staying show'd thee, thee,
 But rising makes me doubt, that now,

Thou art not thou.

That love is weake, where feare's as strong as hee;
 'Tis not all spirit, pure, and brave,
 If mixture it of *Feare, Shame, Honor*, have.
 Perchance as torches which must ready bee,
 Men light and put out, so thou deal'st with mee,
 Thou cam'st to kindle, goest to come; Then I
 Will dreame that hope againe, but else would die.

In *The Message* where the opening words seem to be leading directly to a description of the lovely fair, the poet skillfully avoids such issue.

Send home my long strayd eyes to mee,
 Which (Oh) too long have dwelt on thee;
 Yet since there they have learn'd such ill,
 Such forc'd fashions,
 And false passions,
 That they be
 Made by thee
 Fit for no good sight, keep them still.

Send home my harmlesse heart againe,
 Which no unworthy thought could staine;
 But if it be taught by thine
 To make jestings
 Of protesting,
 And crosse both
 Word and oath,
 Keepe it, for then 'tis none of mine.

Yet send me back my heart and eyes,
 That I may know, and see thy lyes,

And may laugh and joy, when thou
 Art in anguish
 And dost languish
 For some one
 That will none,
 Or prove as false as thou art now.

The much-admired *A Valediction: forbidding mourning* gives no clue to the lady's form and features more definite than her comparison to the "fixt foot" of the compass. Even so Donne's lyric as *A Feaver*, whose mood and music was echoed and re-echoed by later Caroline and Restoration singers, exhibits the same abstraction of all sensuous elements.

Oh doe not die, for I shall hate
 All women so, when thou art gone,
 That thee I shall not celebrate,
 When I remember, thou wast one.

But yet thou canst not die, I know;
 To leave this world behinde, is death,
 But when thou from this world wilt goe,
 The whole world vapors with thy breath.

Or if, when thou, the worlds soule, goest,
 It stay, tis but thy carkasse then,
 The fairest women, but thy ghost,
 But corrupt wormes, the worthyest men.

O wrangling schooles, that search what fire
 Shall burne this world, had none the wit
 Unto this knowledge to aspire,
 That this her feaver might be it?

And yet she cannot wast by this,
 Nor long beare this torturing wrong,
 For much corruption needful is
 To fuell such a feaver long.

These burning fits but meteors bee,
 Whose matter in thee is soone spent.
 Thy beauty, and all parts, which are thee,
 Are unchangeable firmament.

Yet t'was of my minde, seising thee,
 Though it in thee cannot persever.
 For I had rather owner bee
 Of thee one houre, then all else ever.

Compare with this abstract poetry of Donne's almost any random

lyric of pre-seventeenth century origin, such as the doubtfully Chaucerian:

Your yēn two wol slee me sodenly;
I may the beautee of hem not sustene,
So woundeth hit through-out my herte kene.

And but your word wol helen hastily
My hertes wounde, while that hit is grene,
Your yēn two wol slee me sodenly;
I may the beautee of hem not sustene.

Or Spenser's sixty-fourth sonnet:

Comming to kisse her lyps, (such grace I found)
Me seemd I smelt a gardin of sweet flowres:
that dainty odours from them threw around
for Damzels fit to decke their louers bowres.
Her lips did smell lyke unto Gillyflowers,
her ruddy cheekes lyke unto Roses red:
her snowy browes lyke budded Bellamoures,
her louely eyes lyke Pincks but newly spred.
Her goodly bosome lyke a Strawberry bed,
her neck lyke to a bounch of Cullambynes;
her breast lyke lillyes, ere theyr leaves be shed,
her nipples lyke yong blossomed Iessemynes,
Such fragrant flowres doe give most odorous smell,
but her sweet odour did them all excell.

It is immediately evident that a new note has been struck in English poetry. Nor is the traditional explanation that the metaphysical strain is the result of a mere revolt against Petrarchian prettinesses and conceits satisfying. If Donne retained the conceit only to give it tenuousness and sinewy toughness, why did he not stiffen the Petrarchian descriptions with the dark and acrid realism of which he is so capable? Instead he chose virtually to eliminate sensorily perceived beauty from his poetry while placing an undue emphasis on sensuous thought. He acted as he did, I am convinced, not because of a super-intellectualism which scorned the poet's normal materials and methods, but because of a diseased and distorted aesthetic perspective to which all things corporeal took on the aspect of evil. For Donne, of all men, was no *Renaissancemensch*. For him there could be no reckless revelling "in verwegener Sündhaftigkeit," no lifting of himself into an attitude where life could be squandered without regard to moral consequences: it is evident that he made the attempt (the general trend of Gosse's theory that personal experience lay

back of many of the most daring lyric effusions can hardly be rejected); but it is equally evident that a haunting sense of guilt was seldom absent from his boldest flights. Consider two of Donne's most startling lyrics, *Woman's Constancy*,

Now thou hast lov'd me one whole day,
 To morrow when thou leav'st, what wilt thou say?
 Wilt thou then Antedate some new made vow?
 Or say that now
 We are not just those persons, which we were?
 Or, that oathes made in reverentiall feare
 Of Love, and his wrath, any may foresweare.
 Or, as true deaths, true maryages untie,
 So lovers contracts, images of those,
 Binde but till sleep, deaths image, them unloose?
 Or, your owne end to justifie,
 For having purpos'd change, and falsehood; you
 Can have no way but falsehood to be true?
 Vaine lunatique, against these scapes I could
 Dispute, and conquer, if I would
 Which I abstaine to doe,
 For by to morrow, I may thinke so too.

And *The Indifferent*,

I can love both faire and browne,
 Her whom abundance melts, and her whom want betraies,
 Her who loves lonesesse best, and her who maskes and plaies,
 Her whom the country form'd and whom the town,
 Her who beleeves, and her who tries,
 Her who still weepes with spungie eyes,
 And her who is dry corke, and never cries;
 I can love her, and her, and you and you,
 I can love any, so she be not true.

Will no other vice content you?
 Wil it not serve your turn to do, as did your mothers?
 Or have you all old vices spent, and now would finde out others?
 Or doth a feare, that men are true, torment you?
 Oh we are not, be not you so,
 Let mee, and doe you, twenty know.
 Rob mee, but binde me not, and let me goe.
 Must I, who came to travaile thorow you,
 Grow your fixt subject, because you are true?

Venus heard me sigh this song,
 And by Loves sweetest Part, Variety, she swore,
 She heard not this till now; and that it should be so no more.
 She went, examin'd, and return'd ere long,

And said, alas, Some two or three
 Poore Heretiques in love there bee,
 Which thinke to stablish dangerous constancie.
 But I have told them, since you will be true,
 You shall be true to them, who are false to you.

Through the cynicism of these poems there breathes an air of blustering braggadocio as though the writer were trying to convince himself as well as the reader, that his emancipation is real, that he has, indeed, thrown off the shackles of self-restraint and arrived at a conception of life "beyond good and evil." But the protests scarcely achieve their purpose; the very braggadocio gives eloquent testimony not only of the existence of a conscience but of a decidedly uneasy one.

Actually, Donne's was an *anima naturaliter Christiana*. The roots of the Christian tradition were too deeply fixed in his nature, the story of a long line of martyrs to the principles of the Christian faith had been too early learned to be forgotten even in the hectic atmosphere of student and court life. Consequently, the early lyrics, in so far as they are autobiographical, reveal a fierce inward warfare: the intransigent Christian conscience with its memory of the "mystical and metaphysical cloud" never yields although it is battered and rejected; the libertine humanist, on the other hand, goes gaily on his way, sipping here, plucking there, avid in the search for enjoyment even to satiety—which never comes. Leishman would see in these love-experiences a sort of progressive personal evolution.²⁴ I can trace no such thread of continuity through Donne's lyrics. What I do discover rather is almost unvarying testimony to the unsatisfactory nature of his experiences and a strikingly frequent recurrence of the tone of disillusionment. The former note is to be found in *Loves diet*, *The Broken heart*, and the brutal *Farewell to love*; the latter is per-

²⁴ "At one time, then, he really thought that there was such a thing as true love and faithfulness in woman, that there was something in the chivalrous devotion of Spenser and the sonneteers. Then he was deceived, was for a time inflamed with hatred and bitterness, but gradually developed a cynical philosophy of love; resolved to get what enjoyment out of it he could, but not to let it unduly disturb his peace of mind. Therefore he declares that he hates constancy; first, because he is not quite confident that his cynical philosophy is right; secondly, because if some apparently ideal woman should persuade him to discard it he might discover later that after all she was not better than the rest, and so have to pass through the same bitter experience once again. And so he resolves never to let his affections be strongly engaged, not at any rate until he is an old man; then, even if disillusionment awaits him, and if it turns out that there was nothing more in love than what his cynical philosophy had supposed, he will at least have the satisfaction of having got from love most of the enjoyment it had to offer. *In utrumque paratus*, in fact." J. B. Leishman, *The Metaphysical Poets, Donne, Herbert, Vaughan, Traherne*. Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1934, pp. 19-20.

fectly set forth in *Negative love*:

I Never stoop'd so low, as they
Which on an eye, cheek, lip, can prey,
Seldome to them, which soare no higher
Then vertue or the minde to admire,
For sense and understanding may

Know, what gives fuell to their fire:
My love, though silly, is more brave,
For may I misse, when ere I crave,
If I know yet, what I would have.

If that be simply perfectest
Which can by no way be exprest
But *Negatives*, my love is so.

To All, which all love, I say no.
If any who deciphers best,
What we know not, our selves, can know,
Let him teach mee that nothing; This
As yet my ease, and comfort is,
Though I speed not, I cannot misse.

What I find in Donne's most unconventional poems, then, is evidence not of a swaggeringly self-satisfied sixteenth century Dionysian, but the appearance of an inverted Puritanism (I use the word in its loose, modern sense, not in the seventeenth century doctrinal sense), which casts its shadow athwart the senses and the emotions which the senses feed. A recent critic has noted Donne's inability to escape the atmosphere of contamination:

On the highest, or what Donne supposed to be the highest, level we have the poems of ostentatiously virtuous love, *The Undertaking*, *A Valediction: forbidding mourning*, and *The Extasie*. It is here that the contrast between Donne and his happier contemporaries is most marked. He is trying to follow them into the new age, to be at once passionate and innocent; and if any reader will make the experiment of imagining Beatrice or Juliet or Perdita, or again, Amoret or Britomart, or even Philoclea or Pamela, as the auditress throughout these poems, he will quickly feel that something is wrong. You may deny, as perhaps some do, that the romantic conception of "pure" passion has any meaning; but certainly, if there is such a thing, it is not like this. It does not prove itself pure by talking about purity. It does not keep on drawing distinctions between spirit and flesh to the detriment of the latter and then explaining why the flesh is, after all, to be used. This is what Donne does, and the result is singularly unpleasant.²⁵

The insistence here on the element of grossness in Donne, the candid

²⁵ C. S. Lewis, "Donne and Love Poetry in the Seventeenth Century," *Seventeenth Century Studies Presented to Sir Herbert Grierson*. Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1938, p. 76.

student must admit, is justifiable. Yet Donne is not, I think, in his better moments, so much deliberately impure as he is confused. The struggle which went on in his mind as the valid claims of the senses, now no longer reconcilable with spiritual purity through the medium of the sacramental idealism, were subverted into a feverish and tormented sensuality must, for such a nature, issue into either of two alternatives—a rigorous denial of quarter to the senses on the one hand, or, on the other, final dejection and despair. As a matter of fact, he ultimately chose the first, but that the second had made an eloquent appeal the *Biathanatos* offers ample evidence. That Gosse was right in his theory that the *Biathanatos* is the result of a serious sickness of Donne's soul seems to me unquestionable; that that sickness may well have been due to the internecine struggle I have mentioned seems a not irrational conjecture.

At all events, I am convinced that the power and intensity of Donne's best verses is due to the striving of the outlawed senses to return to the legitimate co-partnership in creative activity from which the intellect had ejected them. The energy released in such a process is amazing; it is the product of a kind of internal friction which generates at once both heat and light. Consider the opening lines of the familiar *Elegie XVI*:

By our first strange and fatall interview,
 By all desires which thereof did ensue,
 By our long starving hopes, by that remorse
 Which my words masculine perswasive force
 Begot in thee, and by the memory
 Of hurts, which spies and rivals threatned me,
 I calmly beg: But by thy fathers wrath,
 By all paines which want and divorcement hath,
 I conjure thee, and all the oathes which I
 And thou have sworne to seale joynt constancy,
 Here I unsweare, and overswear them thus,
 Thou shalt not love by wayes so dangerous.
 Temper, ô faire Love, loves impetuous rage,
 Be my true Mistris still, not my faign'd Page;
 I'll goe, and, by thy kinde leave, leave behinde
 Thee, onely worthy to nurse in my minde,
 Thirst to come backe; ô if thou die before,
 My soule from other lands to thee shall soare.
 Thy (else Almighty) beautie cannot move
 Rage from the Seas, nor thy love teach them love,
 Nor tame wilde Boreas harshnesse; Thou hast reade
 How roughly hee in peeces shivered

Faire Orithea, whome he swore he lov'd.
 Fall ill or good, 'tis madnesse to have prov'd
 Dangers unurg'd; Feed on this flattery,
 That absent Lovers one in th'other be.

If this passage is carefully analyzed, it becomes apparent at once that this is argumentative, intellectual poetry, which has far more in common with Dryden and the rationalistic versifiers of the eighteenth century than it has with the Elizabethan fellowship. The riot of pageantry, the blaze of color, the heavy perfume of luxurious sights and sounds and smells are gone. There is here scarcely a single sensuous image, and yet the entire passage is vibrant with intense feeling. No better example of what I take Eliot to mean by the poet's "feeling his thought" could be found. Through a subtle process of intellectual manufacture the sensuous imagery which is the raw stuff of poetry has been distilled and redistilled until having given up its stimulating properties it is itself dissolved away. But as though to testify that the process of sense-distillation was no easy one—as proof, as it were, that the "wings of sense" sometimes "escape their bars," there follow these lines in the strange bad taste which Grierson has noted:

Dissemble nothing, not a boy, nor change
 Thy bodies habite, nor mindes; bee not strange
 To thy selfe onely; All will spie in thy face
 A blushing womanly discovering grace;
 Richly cloath'd Apes, are call'd Apes, and as soone
 Ecclips'd as bright we call the Moone the Moone.
 Men of France, changeable Camelions,
 Spittles of diseases, shops of fashions,
 Loves fuellers, and the rightest company
 Of Players, which upon the worlds stage be,
 Will quickly know thee, and no lesse, alas!
 Th' indifferent Italian, as we passe
 His warme land, well content to thinke thee Page,
 Will hunt thee with such lust, and hideous rage,
 As Lots faire guests were vext. But none of these
 Nor spungy hydroptique Dutch shall thee displease,
 If thou stay here.

Two other lyrics of Donne's represent admirably this poetry born of intellectual distillation but still haunted by the dim but powerful fragrance of the essence of sense:

The Undertaking

I have done one braver thing
 Then all the Worthies did,

And yet a braver thence doth spring,
Which is, to keepe that hid.

It were but madness now t'impart
The skill of specular stone,
When he which can have learn'd the art
To cut it, can finde none.

So, if I now should utter this,
Others (because no more
Such stuffe to worke upon, there is,)
Would love but as before.

But he who lovelinesse within
Hath found, all outward loathes,
For he who colour loves, and skinne,
Loves but their oldest clothes.

If, as I have, you also doe
Vertue attir'd in woman see,
And dare love that, and say so too,
And forget the Hee and Shee;

And if this love, though placed so,
From prophane men you hide,
Which will no faith on this bestow,
Or, if they doe, deride:

Then you have done a braver thing
Then all the Worthies did;
And a braver thence will spring,
Which is, to keepe that hid.

Aire and Angels

Twice or thrice had I loved thee,
Before I knew thy face or name;
So in a voice, so in a shapelesse flame,
Angells affect us oft, and worship'd bee;
Still when, to where thou wert, I came,
Some lovely glorious nothing I did see.
But since my soule, whose child love is,
Takes limmes of flesh, and else could nothing doe,
More subtile then the parent is,
Love must not be, but take a body too,
And therefore what thou wert, and who,
I bid Love aske, and now
That it assume thy body, I allow,
And fixe it selfe in thy lip, eye, and brow.

Whilst thus to ballast love, I thought,
 And so more steddily to have gone,
 With wares which would sinke admiration,
 I saw I had loves pinnace overfraught,
 Ev'ry thy haire for love to worke upon
 Is much too much, some fitter must be sought;
 For not in nothing, nor in things
 Extreme, and scatt'ring bright, can love inhere;
 Then as an Angell, face, and wings
 Of aire, not pure as it, yet pure doth weare,
 So thy love may be my loves spheare;
 Just such disparitie
 As is twixt Aire and Angells puritie,
 'Twixt womens love, and mens will ever bee.

The poems that I have cited illustrate admirably the rare and pungent quality of Donne's lyric muse when her strength is sufficient for her all but superhuman task of keeping in balance an artistic superstructure from which the sensory foundation has been abstracted. But after all this kind of poetry is not of the normal mood and manner. There is something feverish, something fretful, about it which bespeaks disease. The strain is too great, the tremendous energy necessary for its successful creation cannot be for long supplied. Consequently where Donne succeeds once, he fails often, and the failures are characterized invariably by an agitated delight in the antithesis of the escaped ideal. Thus, from the too rare atmosphere of the supra-sensory he plunges into the animalism of *The apparition*, the *Farewell to love*, and certain of the *Elegies*.

The end of the contest in Donne's mind between the rival claims of flesh and spirit, so far was this blustering worldling from possessing the true reckless spirit of the *Renaissancemensch*, is to be seen in the artistic aridity of the religious poems. Gosse has noted the unsatisfactory character of Donne's religious verses:

If Donne's early hymns and litanies do not move us, it is largely due to the fact that they did not move himself. They are frigid, they are stiffened with legal and medical phraseology, the heart of a sinner saved does not beat beneath their "cross and correct concupiscence of wit."

An excess of ingenuity is peculiarly fatal to the unction of religious poetry. Unless it is spontaneous, unless it palpitates with ecstasy or moans with aspiration, unless it is the outpouring of a contrite spirit, it leaves upon the listener a sense of painful artificiality. The dogmatic verses of Donne do not escape from this disability. We admit their cleverness, and are sure that it is misplaced.²⁶

²⁶ *The Life and Letters of John Donne*, Vol. I, p. 264.

Grierson, too, found Donne's religious poetry of a secondary order:

But such a spirit will not easily produce great devotional poetry. There are qualities in the religious poetry of simpler and purer souls to which Donne seldom or never attains. The natural love of God which overflows the pages of the great mystics, which dilates the heart and the verses of a poet like the Dutchman Vondel, the ardour and tenderness of Crashaw, the chaste, pure piety and penitence of Herbert, the love from which devotion and ascetic self-denial come unbidden—to these Donne never attained. The high and passionate joy of *The Anniversary* is not heard in his sonnets or hymns. Effort is the note which predominates—the effort to realize the majesty of God, the heinousness of sin, the terrors of Hell, the mercy of Christ.²⁷

The specific fault which renders most of Donne's religious poetry lifeless and mechanical is to be observed in its most objectionable form in the fifth and sixth of the *La Corona* sonnets:

*By miracles exceeding power of man,
Hee faith in some, envie in some begat,
For, what weake spirits admire, ambitious, hate;
In both affections many to him ran,
But Oh! the worst are most, they will and can,
Alas, and do, unto the immaculate,
Whose creature Fate is, now prescribe a Fate,
Measuring selfe-lives infinity to a span,
Nay to an inch. Loe, where condemned hee
Beares his owne crosse, with paine, yet by and by
When it beares him, he must beare more and die.
Now thou art lifted up, draw mee to thee,
And at thy death giving such liberall dole,
Moyst, with one drop of thy blood, my dry soule.*

*Moyst with one drop of thy blood, my dry soule.
Shall (though she now be in extreme degree
Too stony hard, and yet too fleshly,) bee
Freed by that drop, from being starv'd, hard, or foule,
And life, by this death abled, shall controule
Death, whom thy death slue; nor shall to mee
Feare of first or last death, bring miserie,
If in thy little booke my name thou enroule,
Flesh in that long sleep is not putrified,
But made that there, of which, and for which 'twas;
Nor can by other meanes be glorified.
May then sinnes sleep, and deaths soone from me passe,
That wak't from both, I againe risen may
Salute the last, and everlasting day.*

²⁷ *The Poems of John Donne*, Vol. II, p. li.

It does not require an exhaustive analysis to reveal that from these halting and angular lines the materials of the sensuous perceptions, have been almost entirely removed.

The same over-emphasis on thought and thought-processes to the detriment of the sensory elements exhibits itself in the later *Holy Sonnets*. Two of the sonnets in this group which are among the least poetic and, consequently, admirably illustrate my point, are the second and the eighth:

As due by many titles I resigne
 My selfe to thee, O God, first I was made
 By thee, and for thee, and when I was decay'd
 Thy blood bought that, the which before was thine;
 I am thy sonne, made with thy selfe to shine,
 Thy servant, whose paines thou hast still repaid,
 Thy sheepe, thine Image, and, till I betray'd
 My selfe, a temple of thy Spirit divine;
 Why doth the devill then usurpe on mee?
 Why doth he steale, nay ravish that's thy right?
 Except thou rise and for thine owne worke fight,
 Oh I shall soone despaire, when I doe see
 That thou lov'st mankind well, yet wilt not chuse me,
 And Satan hates mee, yet is loth to lose mee.

If faithfull soules be alike glorified
 As Angels, then my fathers soule doth see,
 And adds this even to full felicitie,
 That valiantly I hels wide mouth o'rstride:
 But if our mindes to these soules be descry'd
 By circumstances, and by signes that be
 Apparent in us, not immediately,
 How shall my mindes white truth by them be try'd?
 They see idolatrous lovers weepe and mourne,
 And vile blasphemous Conjurers to call
 On Iesus name, and Pharisaicall
 Dissemblers feigne devotion. Then turne
 O pensive soule, to God, for he knowes best
 Thy true grieve, for he put it in my breast.

I would not be thought to say that the *Holy Sonnets* never rise to true poetic heights. There are passages scattered here and there which throb with magnificent imagery. But these exceptions do not, I think, invalidate my position; they prove only that Donne was a poet of genuine gifts, who could, from time to time, escape the toils of the poetic philosophy which unconsciously was stifling him.

In the soul of John Donne, then, two rival systems of aesthetic, two irreconcilable interpretations of the relation of the artist to the created universe, fought for mastery. One was the transcendental vision rationally justified by St. Thomas and the mediaeval schoolmen, and translated into terms of artistic "sweetness and light" by St. Francis and his followers, who were themselves the heirs of Bernard of Clairvaux and Hugo of St. Victor. At the heart of the mediaeval aesthetic was the solid conviction that every beauty which spoke to the heart of man was in some inextricable and perhaps inexplicable way, a reflection of the Divine Beauty of which the universe was but a shadow. Difficult as the heart of this doctrine was to grasp, it found plausible objectification in the sacramental ideal—that ideal whereby the externally perceived thing becomes a sign of an inward spiritual significance. It was upon this sacramental ideal that mediaeval aesthetic as well as mediaeval morality was built.

The other and opposing aesthetic was that based on what scraps of the classic Greek ideology had survived in Byzantium. The Greek ideology, while less transcendental than the mediaeval was less disturbed. If it did not attempt to pass beyond the flaming ramparts of the world, it at least had the sound nerves, the clear eyes, the unjaded senses, and the untroubled mind out of whose combined powers were born a hitherto unprecedented vision of physical loveliness and a hitherto unexampled grasp of spiritual truth. But the wholeness of the classic vision was lost in Byzantium, the unity of its power destroyed. A decadence overtook it which transformed its worship of form into carnality, its sensuous apprehensiveness into sensuality.

The results of that clash in Donne were significant both for him and for English poetry. In his case, the first consequence was a sharpening of his powers by that process of internal friction already noted. It was this which produced the "sensuous thinking" of Williamson, the capacity to feel his thought noted by Eliot. But this effect could be only temporary. The reaction which followed terminated in the almost fatal divorce of all sensuous elements from his poetry and the setting of it on the high road of rationalism which was to lead to Dryden and Pope.

CHAPTER VI

DONNE'S MYSTICISM

THAT DONNE was not a mystic has already, in a cursory way, been suggested. Actually, if a deep-rooted division of his mind and heart between the rival claims of the mediaeval synthesis and Renaissance naturalism has been successfully established, it follows as an inescapable conclusion that he could have been none. For whatever the words *mystic* and *mysticism* may mean today, however far they may be removed in their ordinary connotations from the precise and positive significance which they once possessed, in Donne's time they were applied to a mood made possible and fecundated by the complete unity of the mediaeval consciousness.

Nevertheless, there has been a rather general agreement among critics in calling Donne a mystic. From Gosse to Williamson, a roll call of those who have written significantly of him will reveal that for the most part they have assumed mysticism to be one of his distinguishing characteristics while attributing a variety of meanings to the term. One of the most plausible statements on this point is that of Gosse:

The most illustrious of Donne's indirect disciples was Crashaw, the greatest of English mystics. Without the example of Donne, Crashaw would have written in a totally different manner, but the influences at work in the modelling of his genius are largely exotic also. He was seduced by the gorgeous and sensuous conceits of Marini, the worst of masters, but was saved from destruction by the Spanish neo-platonists. Donne wrote his chief poetry too early to be disturbed by the *Spiritual Works* of St. John of the Cross, which were posthumously published in 1616, but these entered into the very blood of Crashaw, while to the great St. Teresa he owed as much, nay, probably more, than Donne himself had done. The intensity of Donne's style at its best, and the mental concentration which he had taught, lent themselves peculiarly well to the expression of transcendental spiritual emotion. Indeed, in England, mysticism has always since the reign of Elizabeth spoken in the voice of Donne. The Spanish illuminates combined with the English master to impress upon the burning heart of Crashaw an ecstasy which found speech in some of the most exquisite utterances of the seventeenth century, and it is only fair, while we deplore the dulness of much of the verse which claimed descent from Donne, to remember that he was at least equally the forerunner and "only begetter" of those "large draughts of intellectual day," those throbbing and flaming phrases of divine hyperbole, which place the name of Crashaw, an Englishman,

beside, or a very little way below, that of the Mother of all mystics, the incomparable Carmelite of Avila.¹

Much more searching and explicit in her attribution of the mystic doctrines to Donne is Miss Ramsay whose wide acquaintance with mystic thought as it is revealed in the mediaeval thinkers makes her opinion eminently worthy of respect:

On ne peut guère isoler le mysticisme de Donne du reste de sa pensée. Sa philosophie de la vie et sa conception de l'Univers sont profondément et essentiellement chrétiennes et mystiques. En réalité, c'est à peine si l'on peut formuler les doctrines les plus simples du christianisme sans parler le langage du mystique. Même Locke dans un traité aussi foncièrement pratique et critique que son *Essai sur l'Entendement Humain*, devient à moitié mystique, lorsqu'il se permet de toucher un instant à ce qui est, chez lui aussi, le fond de sa pensée, la conception chrétienne de Dieu.

Si cette idée transforme ainsi le style de Locke, si elle l'appelle à oublier un moment le sujet dont il traite en critique posé, qu'est-ce qu'elle fera chez Donne, quelle prise aurait-elle sur un esprit ardent comme l'est le sien! Pour Donne, comme pour St. Thomas et tous les mystiques, Dieu est la grande réalité. Il ne peut parler longuement de quelque sujet que ce soit, sans revenir à l'idée de Dieu.²

But Miss Ramsay is far too familiar with mediaeval thought in general to be satisfied with this sweeping identification of Donne with mediaeval mystical thought; rather she finds it necessary to qualify, perhaps better, to apologize for, Donne's mysticism. Noting his violent denials of the mystic experiences of Phillip Neri and Ignatius Loyola, she writes:

Nous voyons que Donne comme théologien semble plutôt se défier de cette extase mystique. Ce qu'il comprend et ce qui lui semble légitime et bien-faisant à l'âme, c'est comme nous allons voir, l'élan mystique que St. Augustin décrit. Mais il a plutôt l'air de douter, de la valeur spirituelle de l'extase connue des mystiques modernes, qu'il distingue du ravissement de St. Paul ou des visions des saints du nouveau Testament. C'est aussi dans ses poèmes, surtout dans ses chants d'amour, qu'on trouve l'exposition la plus complète de cette expérience.³

But even in the love poems, Donne's interpretation of the mystic experience reveals a fatal flaw to this critic:

Il se sauve de lui-même dans la communauté de l'Eglise, cherchant des forces morales dans la présence d'autres âmes en prière. Mais c'est dans la solitude que les grands mystiques ont cherché Dieu. Il manque à Donne,

¹ *Op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 347-348.

² *Les doctrines médiévales chez Donne*, p. 224.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 235.

il lui a toujours manqué cette unification, cette harmonie intérieure, que ce grand maître des mystiques, Plotin, a tenu pour condition essentielle de la vision mystique. Et c'est dans son oeuvre poétique que ce défaut se fait sentir le plus.⁴

Like Gosse and Miss Ramsay in his restriction of the term "mystic" to a relatively narrow meaning, Bredvold, too, applies it repeatedly to Donne:

... in some personal experience or crisis he had acquired an insight into a mystery not explained by "controverted divinity" and become a mystic.⁵

Justly, too, Bredvold finds the Augustinian element bulking large in the shaping of Donne's thought:

To this tradition Donne belongs as a religious teacher and mystic; true to this tradition, he was dissatisfied with the impersonal and intellectual conception of God, desiring a personal God in which his heart, not his mind, might find rest.⁶

But all his experience, his youthful interest in the relativist thought typified by Montaigne, his search for the true Church, his wrestling with scholastic divinity, his gradually deepening religious insight, had all directed him toward the conclusion of Pascal, that philosophical dogmatism is a danger to the religious life, that the heart has its reasons of which the reason knows nothing.⁷

Far more inclusive than these critics in his claims for Donne's mysticism and its subsequent influences is Williamson; far vaguer, too, is the latter in his conception of the meaning of the term, *mystic*:

However, Donne's closest disciples are awakened in a profounder way by what we may call the trinity of his genius, his mysticism, logic, and passionate intensity. These are the qualities which made his thinking and feeling individual in his own age; these are signs by which we recognize the poets who belong to the Donne tradition.⁸

And surely we have never had an art structure so adapted to mystical expression as that which these poets created upon the basis of their sensibility. Professor Courthope excuses Dante's enigmatic and abundant imagery on the ground that it was the logical and necessary consequence of his subject-matter, because Dante was describing the nature of the unseen world and only by such imagery could he make the reality of his experience clear. But so were the metaphysicals, in their smaller way, describing the

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 242.

⁵ "The Religious Thought of Donne in Relation to Medieval and Later Tradition," *Studies in Shakespeare, Milton, and Donne*. New York and London: Macmillan Company, 1925, University of Michigan Publications, Language and Literature, Vol. I, p. 214.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 222.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 226.

⁸ *The Donne Tradition*, p. 235.

nature of the unseen world of life, love, death, and eternity. What else was Donne doing "at the round earths imagin'd corners"?⁹

... naturalism, scepticism, and mysticism, are the three strands which mingle in Donne's intellectual and religious development.¹⁰

Finally, there is the judgment of Mrs. Simpson who sees Donne's mysticism triumphant over the internal tension which rent his soul and divided his heart:

Donne's mysticism cannot be isolated from the rest of his thought; for his whole philosophy is that of a Christian mystic reared in the Neo-Platonic tradition which the scholastic writers of the Middle Ages had inherited. The terms "mystic" and "mysticism" are often used so loosely that it may seem dangerous to apply them to a writer like Donne. There is nothing of the occultist about him; he never dabbled in alchemy, or astrology, and though he speaks with respect of the Jewish Kabbala, he expressly disclaims any acquaintance with hidden cabalistic mysteries concealed from the ordinary believer. On the other hand if "mysticism" is regarded as a synonym for loose thinking and confused expression, there is little mysticism in Donne's work.

But there is a school of religious thought which can rightly be called mystical, and to this Donne belongs. . . . The poems are full of the mystical consciousness of the one behind the many. It is this which dominates his idea of the relations between God and the universe, man and woman, body and soul. God is not apart from the universe. He is in every part of it, and in Him we live and move and have our being. However bitterly Donne might scoff at woman's faithlessness, in his more serious moments he gave utterance to a mystical conception of love and of the spiritual idea of womanhood which seemed extravagant to his contemporaries. Again the body is not to him only the muddy vesture of decay, the matter to which the soul gives form. It is this, but it is more than this, for it is the temple of the Holy Ghost and shares the dignity of its immortal inmate.¹¹

It is Donne's deep sense of the underlying unity of all things and the consequent analogy between the spiritual and physical worlds, that lies at the root of his habit of discovering "occult resemblances between things apparently unlike," which Johnson indicated as the distinctive feature of the "metaphysical" poets. There would seem indeed to be a close connexion between the temperament of the mystic and the "conceited" metaphysical style, for there is a distinctly metaphysical element in the writings of such different types of mystics as Richard Rolle, Boehme, Suso, St. Teresa, and Luis de Granada. And on the other hand the most notable of the "metaphysical" poets who followed Donne—George Herbert, Vaughan, Crashaw—were all men who had a strongly marked mystical vein. The mystic is

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 236-237.

¹⁰ "Donne and the Poetry of Today," *A Garland for John Donne*, p. 160.

¹¹ *Op. cit.*, pp. 97-99.

forced to speak to men in symbols, for he knows that the things which he would utter are in truth ineffable, and can only be shadowed forth dimly in parables and dark sayings. St. Paul speaks of himself as having been "caught up into Paradise and having heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter." The testimony of Plotinus is similar: "That which is divine is ineffable, and cannot be shown to those who have not had the happiness to see it." Yet the mystic who is also a poet or a philosopher is forced to use words for this transcendent experience in order to describe it to other men. He has no language which can adequately describe it, and he therefore employs images and metaphors, knowing indeed that they are unequal to this task, but believing that there is an inner unity between the spiritual and material worlds which makes the things of sense a reflection, though but a faint one, of the things of spirit.¹²

Yet Donne was himself a mystic and saw all material things as symbols of an inner reality.¹³

Two things are obvious from a consideration of these critical remarks on the mysticism of Donne. The first is that each of the critics uses the terms *mysticism* and *mystic* in an extremely loose and informal sense. If mysticism imply only an aptness for wrestling with "the nature of the unseen world of life, love, death, and eternity," as Williamson seems to suggest, then all but the veriest mechanists among the poets have been mystics—a thought which indeed calls attention to the essential fellowship of the greatest of the "makers" in all times, but which robs the mystic concept of the particularity of meaning which it once held and still does hold for those who use the word with anything of its original significance. Or if, in Mrs. Simpson's eloquent phrase, the mystic is no more than one "forced to speak to men in symbols, for he knows that the things which he would utter are in truth ineffable, and can only be shadowed forth dimly in parables and dark sayings," is it not likewise apparent that every poet worthy of the name is a mystic? For there is no surer mark of differentiation between true poetry of a high order and mere pedestrian metrics than the admission frankly made by the former of the inadequacy of the words for their appointed task. Does not herein lie the perpetual charm of an Aeschylus, a Dante, or a Shakespeare—that even the magic phrases which he uses to describe his experience make of the over-freight of their spiritual burden a confession "fain-hidden, full confessed?" Again, from Miss Ramsay's statement that it is difficult "formuler les doctrines les plus simples du christianisme sans parler le langage du mystique" there can be

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 100-101.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 251.

no dissent, but it does not follow from this statement that everyone who subscribes to the doctrines of Christianity or even repeats the mystical language in which they are couched is on that account a mystic. "Many," says Socrates in the *Phaedo*, "are the thyrsus-bearers, but few are the mystics."

The critics of Donne have not only spoken loosely of his mysticism, each emphasizing for his purpose a different phase of that quality of his thought; with the exception of Miss Ramsay they have neglected entirely the meaning which mediaevalism attached to this concept—the meaning, consequently, which Donne himself would have attached to it—and even Miss Ramsay's analysis of mediaeval mysticism is scarcely adequate.

As a preface to an attempted interpretation of the mediaeval idea of mysticism I call attention here to Maritain's distinction between the mediaeval and modern connotations of the term:

There is such lamentable misuse of the word "mysticism" in our days, that it is the more important to recover and settle its exact sense.

There are two methods of definition: one, which can be called material, or by the greatest extension, and is that of the moderns; and a method which we shall call formal, or by the purest instance, which was that of the ancients.

By the former, we enclose at a stroke the wide territory which is found actually to belong to a word taken in its crude state, with all the extension it allows in current usage; and we thus risk taking in the oddest elements, as happened to William James when he studied religious experience. By the second, we consider first the most eminent and most typical case in which the word in question is used strictly, to discover particularly the intelligible form which it signifies; then we progressively widen the sense thus obtained, extending the notion, stretching it to the extreme limit of elasticity.

If we use the second method and question the science competent in the matter, I mean, theology, we see that the word mysticism belongs strictly and primarily to the "experimental knowledge of divine things obtained by the gift of Wisdom," and more generally to the state of the man who lives habitually "under the governance of the gifts of the Holy Spirit." That is the perfectly accurate notion of mysticism; it is a life which is at the same time intellectual and affective, and super-eminently so, since the gift of Wisdom, if it supposes charity, resides in the intelligence. The mystic is beyond reason—because he is united to the source of reason, intelligence in him becomes the discipline of love—because, deprived on earth of the vision of God, charity alone can connaturalize us with divine things and so obtain for us a superrational knowledge of those things.

How will that essentially theological notion expand by becoming de-based?

Make it fall to the level of nature, and it will then mean every effort to arrive at divine union or some substitute for it (the Absolute, Truth, Perfection, Power . . .) by overpassing reason, but by natural means. It may be by feeling and then we have the mysticism of sensibility, "belphegorism" to use a fashionable word; it may be by pure intelligence, and then we have the mysticism of the intelligence, we may say, in a very general sense, the Gnosis, or that kind of metaphysical ecstasy of which there seem to be traces in the Upanishads.

Lastly, if the notion of mysticism gets still more degraded and lowered, the word mystic will be applied to the state of anyone who is guided, not by reason, but by a semi-religious "faith" in any ideal (or myth), and in this sense Péguy spoke of republican mysticism; yet more generally the term will be applied to the state of a man naturally disposed to admit the existence of an invisible world of greater importance for us than the visible world, and to seek in things an element which simple rational knowledge is inadequate to grasp.¹⁴

It is particularly important to note here Maritain's insistence that mysticism "is a life which is at the same time intellectual and affective, and supereminently so, since the gift of Wisdom, if it supposes charity, resides in the intelligence. The mystic is beyond reason—because he is united to the source of reason, intelligence in him becomes the discipline of love—"; for all too frequently, in modern usage, mysticism is assumed to imply a rejection or flight from the intellect and a taking refuge in mere emotionalism.

For the men and women of the Middle Ages mysticism was one of the all-important sciences of ultimates. Another was metaphysics. These two sciences (for mysticism in its pristine sense is as truly a science as metaphysics) were not antagonistic, but complementary. The science of metaphysics was one branch of the complex mediaeval philosophy, but while in modern usage it is often thought of as having theological implications, actually its concern was with, and it addressed itself to, man's natural intellectual powers. It sought to provide an explanation, to supply a logic, for the created universe, whose mystery then as now was forever haunting the souls of men, by establishing the eternal laws which lay behind and gave stability to the puzzling flux of material appearances. But because for the mediaevalists the world of ideas, the universe of spirit, was as much a reality as the world of things, metaphysics did not stop with its rationalization of matter but insisted that its basic postulates might be applied to matter or to spirit indifferently, since these "con-

¹⁴ *Three Reformers*. London: Sheed & Ward, 1928, pp. 226–228.

tain no necessary reference to one order rather than to the other." The science of metaphysics, as I have already suggested, became suspect with the advent of Cartesian rationalism—with the final divorce in the western mind of the two orders which hitherto had been conceived as supplementary to each other—and with the rise of Kant the validity of the metaphysical synthesis was definitely rejected.

The mediaeval science of mysticism, on the contrary, addressed itself, not to man's natural and unaided intellect, but, as Maritain says, to the mind of the man living habitually "under the governance of the gifts of the Holy Spirit." Yet, however intellectual its appeal was in its essence, it did not reject the world of sense. The mystic quest involved a tremendous effort aimed at achieving a perfect union with God. In the words of Evelyn Underhill:

... the end which the mystic sets before him on his pilgrimage is conscious union with a living Absolute. That Divine Dark, that Abyss of the Godhead, of which he sometimes speaks as the goal of his quest, is just this Absolute, the Uncreated Light in which the Universe is bathed, and which—transcending, as it does, all human powers of expression—he can only describe to us as *dark*. But there is—must be—contact, "in an intelligible where" between every individual self and this Supreme Self, this All. In the mystic, this union is conscious, personal, and complete. More or less according to his measure, he has touched the substantial Being of Deity, not merely its manifestation in life. This it is which distinguishes him from the best and most brilliant of other men, and makes his science, in Patmore's words, "the science of self-evident Reality." Gazing with him into that ultimate Abyss, that unsearchable ground whence the World of Becoming comes forth "eternally generated in an eternal Now," we may see only the icy darkness of perpetual negations: but he looks upon the face of Perfect Love.¹⁵

And to men as convinced as were the mediaevalists of the essential unity of divine purpose which lay behind the creation, it was a matter of course to call upon all the powers of man, sensible as well as intellectual, to insure the success of that quest. A clear understanding of this point is extremely important, for it was only by his flawless equating of the intellectual and the sensible that the mediaeval mystic was saved from the idiosyncrasies and excesses which have come to be associated rather generally with the word in modern times.

But before the mystic could arrive at that untroubled harmonization of the two phases of his human nature which was essential to the success of his effort, it was necessary that he enter upon the purgative

¹⁵ *Mysticism*. New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, 1911, pp. 86-87.

way—the first stage of the mystic journey. The nature of the purgative experience is well set forth by Miss Underhill:

Apart from the plain necessity of casting out imperfections and sin, what is the type of “good character” which will best serve the self in its journey towards union with the Absolute?

The mystics of all ages and all faiths agree in their answer. Those three virtues which the instinct of the Catholic Church fixed upon as the necessities of the cloistered life—the great Evangelical counsel of voluntary Poverty, with its departments: Chastity, the poverty of the senses, and Obedience, the poverty of the will—are also, when raised to their highest term and transmuted by the Fire of Love, the essential virtues of the mystical quest.

By *Poverty* the mystic means an utter self-stripping, the casting off of immaterial as well as material wealth, a complete detachment from all finite things. By *Chastity* he means an extreme and limpid purity of soul, virgin to all but God; by Obedience, that abnegation of selfhood, that mortification of the will, which results in a complete humility, a “holy indifference” to the accidents of life. These three aspects of perfection are really one: linked together as irrevocably as the three aspects of the self. Their common characteristic is this: they tend to make the subject regard itself, not as an isolated and interesting individual, possessing desires and rights, but as a scrap of the Cosmos, an ordinary bit of the Universal Life, only important as a part of the All, an expression of the Will Divine. Detachment and purity go hand in hand, for purity is but detachment of heart; and where these are present they bring with them that humble spirit of obedience which expresses detachment of will. We may therefore treat them as three manifestations of one thing: which thing is Inward Poverty. “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven” is the motto of all pilgrims on this road.¹⁶

If, as it has been called in no derogatory sense, Christianity is a religion of paradoxes, nowhere is this designation more applicable than to the case of the mediaeval mystic. In the *Ballad of The White Horse* Chesterton ends Alfred’s song of defiance to the conquering Danes with the enigmatic couplet

... it is only Christian men
Guard even heathen things;

but above all Christian men it is the mystic who, by the process of renunciation, comes to see as through eyes from which the scales have fallen the potentialities of joy which lie in the universe sensibly perceived.

Whatever may be the case with other deniers of the senses, it is true that the pure soul of the mystic, dwelling on high levels of reality, his eyes set

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 247–248.

on the Transcendental World, is capable of combining with the perfection of detachment that intense and innocent joy in natural things, as veils and vessels of the divine, which results from seeing "all creatures in God and God in all creatures."¹⁷

The experience here described is one to which a host of mystics have testified but concerning which nothing essential has been added since St. Augustine:

And I ascended, as it were, by steps from bodies to the soul. . . . Then it was that I discerned in my understanding *thy invisible things understood by the things which are made*.¹⁸

Thy whole creation never ceaseth, nor is ever silent in thy praises: every spirit praiseth thee by the mouth converted to thee, and all living creatures and corporeal things by the mouth of such as contemplate thy wisdom in them; that this soul of ours may ascend from its weariness towards thee, by the steps of the things thou hast made, and may pass on to thee who hast wonderfully made them, and there is its refection and true strength.¹⁹

To St. John of the Cross, however, must go the credit for the classic statement of the paradox of renunciation, whereby "he who loses his life shall find it"—

In order to arrive at having pleasure in everything,
Desire to have pleasure in nothing.

In order to arrive at possessing everything,
Desire to possess nothing.

In order to arrive at being everything,
Desire to be nothing.

In order to arrive at knowing everything,
Desire to know nothing.

In order to arrive at that wherein thou hast no pleasure,
Thou must go by a way wherein thou hast no pleasure.

In order to arrive at that which thou knowest not,
Thou must go by a way that thou knowest not.

In order to arrive at that which thou possessest not,
Thou must go by a way that thou possessest not.

In order to arrive at that which thou art not,
Thou must go through that which thou art not.

The Way Not To Impede The All

When thou thinkest upon anything,
Thou ceaseth to cast thyself upon the All.

For, in order to pass from the all to the All,
Thou hast to deny thyself wholly in all.

And, when thou comest to possess it wholly,

¹⁷ Underhill, *op. cit.*, pp. 248-249.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, Bk. V, Chap. I.

¹⁸ *Confessions*, Bk. VII, Chap. XVII, Par. 2.

Thou must possess it without desiring anything.
 For if thou wilt have anything in all,
 Thou hast not thy treasure purely in God.

In this detachment the spiritual soul finds its quiet and repose; for, since it covets nothing, nothing wearies it when it is lifted up, and nothing oppresses it when it is cast down, for it is in the centre of its humility; since, when it covets anything, at that very moment it becomes wearied.²⁰

This insistence on purgation as the first step in the mystical way is a counsel which pervades all mediaeval mysticism. A century and more before St. John of the Cross, Thomas à Kempis had written:

Da totum pro toto, nil exquire, nil repete; sta pure et inhaesitanter in me: et habebis me. Eris liber in corde: et tenebrae non conculcabunt te. Ad hoc conare, hoc ora, hoc desidera: ut ab omni proprietate possis expoliari et nudus nudum Jesum sequi; tibi mori: et mihi aeternaliter vivere.²¹

In England, where the history of mysticism begins with Margery Kempe, the anchoress of Lynn, at the end of the thirteenth century, no less than on the continent, there is the same insistence on the unconditional stripping of self; it is found in full measure in the fourteenth century mystics, Richard Rolle of Hampole, Mother Julian of Norwich, and Walter Hilton, and it continues to be a touchstone of mystic thought until "the sense of personal sin wanes with the inrush of modern self-assertion."²²

But if purgation is the first step in the mystic way, the height and crown of the mystic experience, the last term of the mystic contemplation, is ecstasy or rapture. To draw the line between ecstasy and rapture has never been an easy task even for the mystics themselves, but the distinction of Aquinas is basic:

*Ad primum ergo dicendum quod raptus addit aliquid supra extasim. Nam extasis importat simpliciter excessum a seipso, secundum quem scilicet aliquis extra suam ordinationem ponitur; sed raptus super hoc addit violentiam quamdam. Potest igitur extasis ad vim appetitivam pertinere, puta cum alicuius appetitus tendit in ea quae extra ipsum sunt; et secundum hoc Dionysius dicit quod *divinus amor facit extasim*, in quantum scilicet facit appetitum hominis tendere in res amatas: unde postea subdit quod *etiam ipse Deus, qui est omnium causa, per abundantiam amatoriae bonitatis extra seipsum fit per providentiam ad omnia existentia*. Quamvis etiam si expresse*

²⁰ *The Complete Works of Saint John of the Cross*. Edited by E. Allison Peers. London: Burns Oates & Washbourne, Ltd., 1934, Vol. I, pp. 62-63.

²¹ *Opera Omnia*. Vol. II, Liber III, Capitulum 37. Edited by Michael Josephus Pohl. Friburgi Brisigavorum: Herder, 1902-1905.

²² Geraldine E. Hodgson, *English Mystics*. London: A. R. Mowbray & Co. Ltd., 1922, p. 68.

hoc diceretur de raptu, non designaretur, nisi quod amor esset causa raptus.²³

While St. Theresa of Avila, "the mother of all the mystics," seems to make the same distinction between union and rapture which Aquinas makes between ecstasy and rapture, nevertheless her comment on the mystic states is likewise interesting:

Je voudrais pouvoir expliquer avec le secours de Dieu, la différence qui existe entre l'union et le ravissement, qu'on appelle aussi élévation, vol, enlèvement de l'esprit. Tous ces noms expriment une même chose; on lui donne aussi le nom d'extase. Le ravissement l'emporte de beaucoup sur l'union; outre qu'il produit des effets beaucoup plus grandes, il a plusieurs opérations qui lui sont propres. Car, quoiqu'il semble que l'union soit, comme elle l'est en effet quant à l'intérieur, le commencement, le milieu et la fin des autres grâces surnaturelles; celles-ci néanmoins étant dans un degré plus éminent, opèrent non seulement dans l'intérieur, mais aussi à l'extérieur. Daigne le Seigneur m'accorder sa lumière pour un tel sujet, comme il me l'accordée pour ce qui précède; car très certainement, s'il ne m'eût lui-même enseigné de quelle manière je pouvais en donner quelque intelligence, jamais je ne l'aurais su.

Représentons-nous maintenant que cette dernière eau, dont nous avons parlé, tombe avec tant d'abondance, que si la terre ne se refusait à un tel bonheur, nous pourrions croire à juste titre avoir avec nous, dans cet exil, la nuée de la majesté de Dieu. Nous voit-il répondre à un si grand bienfait par la reconnaissance et par les oeuvres, autant que nos forces nous le permettent, alors, de même que les nuées attirent les vapeurs de la terre, de même il attire notre âme tout entière. La nuée s'élève vers le ciel, emportant l'âme avec elle, et Dieu commence à lui dévoiler quelques-unes des merveilles du royaume qui lui est préparé. Je ne sais si la comparaison est juste, mais je sais très bien que cela se passe de la sorte.

Dans ces ravissements, l'âme semble ne plus animer le corps. On s'aperçoit d'une manière très sensible que le chaleur naturelle va s'affaiblissant, et que le corps se refroidit peu à peu, mais avec une suavité et un plaisir inexprimables. Ici il n'y a aucun moyen de résister à l'attrait divin. Dans l'union, nous trouvant encore comme dans notre pays, nous pouvons presque toujours le faire, quoique avec peine et un violent effort; mais il n'en est pas de même dans le ravissement, on ne peut presque jamais y résister. Prévenant toute pensée et toute préparation, il fond souvent sur vous avec une impétuosité si rapide et si forte, que vous voyez, vous sentez cette nuée, vous saisissez, et cet aigle puissant vous emporter sur ses ailes.²⁴

St. Theresa here uses *ecstasy* as a general term to include various states of mystic communion, but she agrees with St. Thomas that

²³ *Summa Theologica*, IIa IIae, qu. CLXXV, art. II.

²⁴ *Vie de Sainte Thérèse*. Traduite par le P. Marcel Bouix, S.J. Seizième édition. Paris: Librairie Victor Lecoffre, 1910, pp. 189-191.

ravissement, or rapture, is accompanied by a Divine Violence which the soul is unable to resist. This point she considers so important that she emphasizes it by repetition:

Nulle autre des opérations de l'esprit dont j'ai parlé n'approche d'une telle impétuosité. J'en demeurais brisée. C'est un combat terrible et qui sert de peu. Quand Dieu veut agir, il n'y a pas de pouvoir contre son pouvoir.²⁵

It is in the ecstatic state that the mystic attains to the "experimental knowledge of divine things obtained by the gift of Wisdom." For him the world of things vanishes before the communion with the Divine may begin.

Quand le divin Époux veut ravir l'âme, il commande que l'on ferme les portes des demeures, et même celle du château et de son enceinte.²⁶

For the task of relating the wonders of that experience, St. Theresa admits the inadequacy of language. She must speak in a figure:

Représentez-vous dans le palais d'un roi, ou d'un grand seigneur, un des appartements privés, cabinet au salon, comme on les nomme; vous y verrez une infinité de cristaux, de verres, d'objets de prix, mais disposés dans un ordre tel qu'on les voit presque tous en entrant. Une fois j'ai eu ce spectacle sous les yeux; c'était chez la duchesse d'Albe, où, dans un de mes voyages, mes supérieurs, sur les instantes prières de cette dame, m'obligèrent de m'arrêter. Dès l'entrée, je demeurai toute surprise et, songeant à quoi pouvait servir cet amas de curiosités, je trouvai que la grande variété de ces créatures me porterait à louer le Créateur; et maintenant, j'admire l'utilité actuelle de ce souvenir. Je restai un certain temps dans ce cabinet; mais cette multitude d'objets si différents fit, qu'à peine sortie, j'oubliai tout ce qui avait frappé mes yeux; comme si je ne les avais jamais vus, je ne pourrai pas en dire aujourd'hui la matière ou la forme; mais je me souviens d'avoir vu l'ensemble.

De même pour le ravissement: l'âme, si perdue en Dieu qu'elle ne fait plus qu'un avec lui, entre dans ce cabinet céleste qui est en chacun de nous, puisque Dieu habite en nous et qu'il doit y avoir quelque appartement, privé. Malgré l'extase, Notre-Seigneur ne permet pas toujours que l'âme voie les secrets de cet appartement.²⁷

Nor is St. Theresa alone in admitting the incapacity of words to reflect the mystic experience. As by unanimous consent, it is to symbolism the mystics have turned in their effort to suggest the completeness of the soul's union with God. Naturally too, the most fav-

²⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. 192.

²⁶ *Le château intérieur*, tome troisième, *Oeuvres de Sainte Thérèse*. Traduites par le P. Marcel Bouix, S.J. Neuvième édition. Paris: Librairie Victor Lecoffre, 1913, p. 397.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 394-395.

hoc diceretur de raptu, non designaretur, nisi quod amor esset causa raptus.²³

While St. Theresa of Avila, "the mother of all the mystics," seems to make the same distinction between union and rapture which Aquinas makes between ecstasy and rapture, nevertheless her comment on the mystic states is likewise interesting:

Je voudrais pouvoir expliquer avec le secours de Dieu, la différence qui existe entre l'union et le ravissement, qu'on appelle aussi élévation, vol, enlèvement de l'esprit. Tous ces noms expriment une même chose; on lui donne aussi le nom d'extase. Le ravissement l'emporte de beaucoup sur l'union; outre qu'il produit des effets beaucoup plus grandes, il a plusieurs opérations qui lui sont propres. Car, quoiqu'il semble que l'union soit, comme elle l'est en effet quant à l'intérieur, le commencement, le milieu et la fin des autres grâces surnaturelles; celles-ci néanmoins étant dans un degré plus éminent, opèrent non seulement dans l'intérieur, mais aussi à l'extérieur. Daigne le Seigneur m'accorder sa lumière pour un tel sujet, comme il me l'accordée pour ce qui précède; car très certainement, s'il ne m'eût lui-même enseigné de quelle manière je pouvais en donner quelque intelligence, jamais je ne l'aurais su.

Représentons-nous maintenant que cette dernière eau, dont nous avons parlé, tombe avec tant d'abondance, que si la terre ne se refusait à un tel bonheur, nous pourrions croire à juste titre avoir avec nous, dans cet exil, la nuée de la majesté de Dieu. Nous voit-il répondre à un si grand bienfait par la reconnaissance et par les oeuvres, autant que nos forces nous le permettent, alors, de même que les nuées attirent les vapeurs de la terre, de même il attire notre âme tout entière. La nuée s'élève vers le ciel, emportant l'âme avec elle, et Dieu commence à lui dévoiler quelques-unes des merveilles du royaume qui lui est préparé. Je ne sais si la comparaison est juste, mais je sais très bien que cela se passe de la sorte.

Dans ces ravissements, l'âme semble ne plus animer le corps. On s'aperçoit d'une manière très sensible que le chaleur naturelle va s'affaiblissant, et que le corps se refroidit peu à peu, mais avec une suavité et un plaisir inexprimables. Ici il n'y a aucun moyen de résister à l'attrait divin. Dans l'union, nous trouvant encore comme dans notre pays, nous pouvons presque toujours le faire, quoique avec peine et un violent effort; mais il n'en est pas de même dans le ravissement, on ne peut presque jamais y résister. Prévenant toute pensée et toute préparation, il fond souvent sur vous avec une impétuosité si rapide et si forte, que vous voyez, vous sentez cette nuée, vous saisissez, et cet aigle puissant vous emporter sur ses ailes.²⁴

St. Theresa here uses *ecstasy* as a general term to include various states of mystic communion, but she agrees with St. Thomas that

²³ *Summa Theologica*, IIa IIae, qu. CLXXV, art. II.

²⁴ *Vie de Sainte Thérèse*. Traduite par le P. Marcel Bouix, S.J. Seizième édition. Paris: Librairie Victor Lecoffre, 1910, pp. 189-191.

ravissement, or rapture, is accompanied by a Divine Violence which the soul is unable to resist. This point she considers so important that she emphasizes it by repetition:

Nulle autre des opérations de l'esprit dont j'ai parlé n'approche d'une telle impétuosité. J'en demeurais brisée. C'est un combat terrible et qui sert de peu. Quand Dieu veut agir, il n'y a pas de pouvoir contre son pouvoir.²⁵

It is in the ecstatic state that the mystic attains to the "experimental knowledge of divine things obtained by the gift of Wisdom." For him the world of things vanishes before the communion with the Divine may begin.

Quand le divin Époux veut ravir l'âme, il commande que l'on ferme les portes des demeures, et même celle du château et de son enceinte.²⁶

For the task of relating the wonders of that experience, St. Theresa admits the inadequacy of language. She must speak in a figure:

Représentez-vous dans le palais d'un roi, ou d'un grand seigneur, un des appartements privés, cabinet au salon, comme on les nomme; vous y verrez une infinité de cristaux, de verres, d'objets de prix, mais disposés dans un ordre tel qu'on les voit presque tous en entrant. Une fois j'ai eu ce spectacle sous les yeux; c'était chez la duchesse d'Albe, où, dans un de mes voyages, mes supérieurs, sur les instantes prières de cette dame, m'obligèrent de m'arrêter. Dès l'entrée, je demeurai toute surprise et, songeant à quoi pouvait servir cet amas de curiosités, je trouvai que la grande variété de ces créatures me porterait à louer le Créateur; et maintenant, j'admire l'utilité actuelle de ce souvenir. Je restai un certain temps dans ce cabinet; mais cette multitude d'objets si différents fit, qu'à peine sortie, j'oubliai tout ce qui avait frappé mes yeux; comme si je ne les avais jamais vus, je ne pourrai pas en dire aujourd'hui la matière ou la forme; mais je me souviens d'avoir vu l'ensemble.

De même pour le ravissement: l'âme, si perdue en Dieu qu'elle ne fait plus qu'un avec lui, entre dans ce cabinet céleste qui est en chacun de nous, puisque Dieu habite en nous et qu'il doit y avoir quelque appartement, privé. Malgré l'extase, Notre-Seigneur ne permet pas toujours que l'âme voie les secrets de cet appartement.²⁷

Nor is St. Theresa alone in admitting the incapacity of words to reflect the mystic experience. As by unanimous consent, it is to symbolism the mystics have turned in their effort to suggest the completeness of the soul's union with God. Naturally too, the most fav-

²⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. 192.

²⁶ *Le château intérieur*, tome troisième, *Oeuvres de Sainte Thérèse*. Traduites par le P. Marcel Bouix, S.J. Neuvième édition. Paris: Librairie Victor Lecoffre, 1913, p. 397.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 394-395.

of expression and of art," but rather to obtain the fullness of their affirmation by the paradoxical way of St. John of the Cross.

But what of the attitude of Donne himself toward those experiences and their expression which to the twentieth century, to the heirs of the spirit of "a Huxley or a Morley" have become "but a hooting of owls"? As in so much of Donne's thinking on controversial issues, there is here an abundance of contradiction. He accepts of course (with many a wearisome quibble) the mystical experiences of St. Augustine, and of other saints, both of the Old and the New Testament.

This is our sphere, and that which we are fain to call our place; and then our *medium*, our way to see him is *patefactio sui*, God's laying himself open, his manifestation, his revelation, his evisceration, and embowelling of himself to us, there. Doth God never afford this patefaction, this manifestation of himself in his essence to any in this life? We cannot answer yea, nor no, without offending a great part in the school, so many affirm, so many deny, that God hath been seen in his essence in this life. There are that say, that it is *fere de fide*, little less than an article of faith, that it hath been done; and Aquinas denies it so absolutely, as that his followers interpret him *de absoluta potentia*, that God by his absolute power cannot make a man, remaining a mortal man, and under the definition of a mortal man, capable of seeing his essence; as we may truly say, that God cannot make a beast remaining in that nature, capable of grace, or glory. St. Augustine speaking of discourses that passed between his mother, and him, not long before her death, says *Perambulavimus cuncta mortalia, et ipsum caelum*, We talked ourselves above this earth, and above all the heavens; *Venimus in mentes nostras, et transcendimus eas*, We came to the consideration of our own minds, and our own souls, and we got above our own souls; that is, to the consideration of that place where our souls should be for ever; and we should consider God then, but then we could not see God in his essence. As it may be fairly argued that Christ suffered not the very torments of very hell, because it is essential to the torments of hell, to be eternal, they were not torments of hell, if they received an end; so is it fairly argued too, that neither Adam in his ecstasy in Paradise, nor Moses in his conversation in the mount, nor the apostles in the transfiguration of Christ, nor St. Paul in his rapture to the third heavens, saw the essence of God, because he that is admitted to that sight of God, can never look off, nor lose that sight again. Only in heaven shall God proceed to this patefaction, this manifestation, this revelation of himself; and that by the light of glory.³²

He facetiously uses the device of the ecstatic trance as a part of the machinery of *Ignatius his Conclave*:

My little wandring sportful Soul, Guest, and companion of my body, had

³² Alford, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 423.

liberty to wander through all places, and to survey and reckon all the roomes, and all the volumes of the heavens, and to comprehend the situation, the dimensions, the nature, the people & the policie, both of the swimming Ilands, the *Planets*, and of all those which are fixed in the Firmament. . . . In the twinkling of an eye, I saw all the roomes in Hell open to my sight.³³

With this *Ignatius* flies upwards, and rushes upon *Boniface*, and throwes him out of his Seat: and *Lucifer* went up with him as fast, and gave him assistance, lest, if he should forsake him, his own Seat might be indangered. And I returned to my body; . . .³⁴

So too, in many of his poems Donne uses the mystic phraseology and speaks the mystic language. The title of *The Extasie* is not aimlessly or accidentally chosen; the otherwise far-fetched imagery of ll. 17-36 becomes perfectly plausible and effective once it is recognized that the poet is transferring to the sphere of human love the mystic conception of the ecstatic contact of the soul with Christ.

And whil'st our soules negotiate there,
 Wee like sepulchrall statues lay;
 All day, the same our postures were,
 And wee said nothing, all the day.
 If any, so by love refin'd,
 That he soules language understood,
 And by good love were growen all minde,
 Within convenient distance stood,
 He (though he knew not which soule spake,
 Because both meant, both spake the same)
 Might thence a new concoction take,
 And part farre purer than he came.
 This Extasie doth unperplex
 (We said) and tell us what we love,
 Wee see by this, it was not sexe,
 Wee see, we saw not what did move:
 But as all severail soules containe
 Mixture of things, they know not what,
 Love, these mixt soules doth mixe againe,
 And makes both one, each this and that.

The same thought underlies these stanzas from *A Valediction: forbidding mourning*:

Dull sublunary lovers love
 (Whose soule is sense) cannot admit
 Absence, because it doth remove
 Those things which elemented it.

³³ Pp. 108-109.

³⁴ P. 215.

But we, by a love, so much refin'd,
 That our selves know not what it is,
 Inter-assured of the mind,
 Care lesse, eyes, lips, and hands to misse.

Our two souls therefore, which are one,
 Though I must goe, endure not yet
 A breach, but an expansion,
 Like gold to ayery thinnesse beate.

Likewise in his sermons the language of mystic experience comes easily to Donne, as in this passage from one of his Easter sermons:

Rapiemur, We shall be caught up. This is a true rapture, in which we do nothing ourselves. Our last act towards Christ, is as our first; in the first act of our conversion we do nothing; nothing in this last act, our resurrection, but *rapiemur*, we are caught. In everything, the more there is left to ourselves, the worse it is done; that that God does entirely, is entirely good. St. Paul had a rapture too; *He was caught up into Paradise; but whether in the body, or out of the body, he cannot tell.* We can tell, that this rapture of ours, shall be in body and soul, in the whole man. Man is but a vapour; but a glorious, and a blessed vapour, when he is attracted, and caught up by this sun, the Son of man, the Son of God. O what a blessed alleviation possesses that Man! and to what a blessed levity, (if without levity we may so speak) to what a cheerful lightness of spirit is he come, that comes newly from confession, and with the seal of absolution upon him! Then, when nothing troubles his conscience, then, when he hath disburdened his soul of all that lay heavy upon it, then, when if his confessor should unjustly reveal it to any other, yet God will never speak of it more to his conscience, nor unbraid him with it, not reproach him for it, what a blessed alleviation, what a holy cheerfulness of spirit is that man come to? How much more in the endowments which we shall receive in the rapture of this text, where we do not only divest all sins past, (as in confession) but all possibility of future sins; and put on, not only incorruption, but incorruptibleness; not only impeccancy, but impeccability. And to be invested with this endowment, *Rapiemur, We shall be caught up*, and *Rapiemur in nubibus, We shall be caught up in the clouds.*³⁵

Grierson thinks it probable that Donne had read Ficino's translation of Plotinus; the opening lines of this passage make it evident (as indeed one should expect) that he had also read St. Thomas' explanation of rapture.

But if the language and the imagery of mediaeval mysticism is of frequent occurrence both in Donne's poetry and in his prose, it must constantly be recollected, lest this fact assume undue significance, that in his sermons, as in his poetry, Donne is ever the conscious

³⁵ Alford, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 493-494.

artist and to the true artist the world of intellect as well as of sense lies all before him where to choose. Consequently Donne's mere employment of the symbolism of mediaeval mysticism is no *prima facie* evidence of his adherence to the mystic faith, since his own close affiliation with mediaeval learning would have made his familiarity with that symbolism a matter of course. The test of Donne's real attitude toward mysticism and the mystic impulse then is not to be found in his casual employment of its machinery when his muse is on the wing; it is to be found rather in an analysis of his reasoned pronouncements on more sober occasions. These latter fall chiefly into two types: the first include his judgments on the alleged mystic experiences of individuals recognized by those competent to judge as true exponents of mysticism; the second embrace his own particularly private utterances in the *Devotions* and *Essayes in Divinity* where his mysticism, if it were a reality, could logically be expected to reveal itself.

As to the first, it is interesting to note that Donne's references to St. Francis of Assisi are uniformly derogatory. For example, in the *Pseudo-Martyr*: "But, those other men, who in a proude humility will say *brother Thiefe*, and *brother Wolfe*, and *brother Asse* (as Saint Francis (perchance not unprophetically) is said to have done) will admit no fraternity nor fellowshippe with Princes."³⁶ In the same work, too, he remarks on the alleged wrenching by the Roman Catholics of the Scriptures: "Out of which they can deduce principall and direct Prophecies for every passage in Saint Francis, his storie."³⁷ In a lenten sermon preached at Whitehall in 1628 he is ever more scoffingly satirical: "They will needs make us believe, that St. Francis preached to birds, and beasts, and stones; but they will not go about to make us believe that those birds, and beasts, and stones joined with St. Francis in prayer."³⁸

It may be objected with some show of reason that these references to St. Francis are of the glancing and occasional sort and cannot therefore be taken as indicative of Donne's reasoned attitude towards mysticism; it may be suggested too, that a personal aversion to the Assisian rather than to mysticism is sufficient to explain the mood and tone of these remarks. But if such objections be accepted as valid in the case of the thirteenth century mystic, they cannot be

³⁶ P. 50.

³⁷ P. 85.

³⁸ Alford, *op. cit.*, Vol. V, p. 397.

urged as an explanation of Donne's hostility toward a sixteenth century mystic, St. Philip Neri:

Yet there is no foulness so foul, so inexcusable in the eyes of God, nor that shall so much aggravate our condemnation, as a false affectation, and an hypocritical [sic] counterfeiting of this purity. There is a pureness, a cleanness imagined (rather dreamed of) in the Roman church, by which (as their words are) the soul is abstracted, not only *a passionibus*, but *a phantasmatis*, not only from passions, and perturbations, but from the ordinary way of coming to know anything; the soul (say they) of men so purified, understands no longer *per phantasmata rerum corporalium*; not by having anything presented by the phantasy to the senses, and so to the understanding, but altogether by a familiar conversation with God, and an immediate revelation from God; whereas Christ himself contented himself with the ordinary way; he was hungry, and a fig-tree presented itself to him upon the way, and he went to it to eat. This is that pureness in the Roman church, by which the founder of the last order among them, Philip Neri, had not only utterly emptied his heart of the world, but had filled it too full of God, for, so (say they) he was fain to cry sometimes, *Recede a me Domine*, O Lord go further from me, and let me have a less portion of thee. But who would be loath to sink, by being over freighted with God, or loath to over-set, by having so much of that wind, the breath of the Spirit of God? Privation of the presence of God, is hell; a diminution of it, is a step toward it. Fruition of his presence is heaven; and shall any man be afraid of having too much heaven, too much God? There are many among them, that are over laden, oppressed with bishoprics and abbeys, and yet they can bear it and never cry, *Retrahe Domine*, *Domine resume*, O Lord withdraw from me, resume to thyself some of these superabundances; and shall we think any of them to be so over freighted and surcharged with the presence, and with the grace of God, as to be put to his *Recede Domine*, O Lord withdraw thyself, and lessen thy grace towards me? This pureness is not in their heart, but in their phantasy.³⁹

Side by side with this passage should be set a reference to St. Philip in the *Pseudo-Martyr*:

And in our daies, Philip Neri the Institutor of the last Order amongst them, who was so familiar in heaven, whilst he lived upon earth, that *he was faine to intreat God to depart further from him, and to draw back his minde from heavenly matters, and turne them upon earthly, before he was able to say Masse, And could heare the Musique and Symphonie of the Angels, And could distinguish any vertue, or any vice, by his smelling, . . .*⁴⁰

That the same sentiment should be expressed concerning the same individual in utterances separated by two decades and inspired by such different occasions would seem rather conclusive evidence of the

³⁹ *Ibid.*, Vol. VI, pp. 102-103.

⁴⁰ P. 109.

conformity of those sentiments to Donne's normal way of thinking. Here then is a categorical denial of the possibility of the ecstatic union which, in the language of orthodox mysticism, marks the crown of the mystic experience. For the soul to know "altogether by a familiar conversation with God and an immediate revelation from God" is to Donne an impossible presumption. Nor may it be argued here that it is the spirit of religious sectarianism which inspires Donne's diatribes. His antipathy to St. Philip is not predicated on the latter's being a Roman Catholic—even the casual reader of the sermons must be impressed by the frequency with which he quotes with approval Bellarmine, Baronius, Serarius, and other contemporary Roman Catholics; it rests rather on the fact that St. Philip represented a type of mind and testified to the actuality of an experience, both of which were inherently distasteful to him.

So, I think, Gosse is unnecessarily puzzled when he marvels that Donne should have evinced no interest in St. Francis de Sales and hazards the opinion that this indifference was due to the temporary lapse of the future Dean's interest in theology:

We are almost indignant that a great English theologian should be in Paris in 1612, and have nothing to tell us of the evolution of French theology. This was the turning-point at which the Protestants ceased to have all the talent on their side, and at which the Gallican divines took up the tale of eloquence. Can we believe that Donne heard nothing said of St. François de Sales, now at the very height of his influence in Paris? Nothing of the *Traité de l'amour de Dieu*, which, in this year, 1612, first saw the light in its imperfect form? The picturesqueness and humour of St. François de Sales, so different from the pomp and studied simplicity of later French theologians, should have interested Donne. The two leading Catholic writers of the moment in Paris, both of them followers of St. François, were the Cardinal du Perron (whom Donne means by Peroun) and Coëffeteau, each of whom was engaged in fitful controversy with the English Protestants, and chiefly with James I. In the absence of St. François in his diocese of Geneva—and even in his presence, for the Saint was no great master of delivery—Coëffeteau was in 1612 the first religious orator of France. With St. François de Sales, at this moment the ruling influence among French divines, Donne had a good deal in common, even to the admiration they both felt for that mundane work, the *Diana Enamorada* of Montemôr. At this moment, however, if the truth be told, Donne's interest in theology was at its nadir, and if he had read the *Traité*, it would have been merely to criticize the mysticism and the style of it.⁴¹

It is more likely that it was not a lack of interest in theology, a per-

⁴¹ *Op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 299.

petually intriguing subject to men of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but a lack of sympathy with the type of mystical mind which St. Francis of Sales represented, which was responsible for Donne's omission of all references to the former.

Turning now to the *Essayes in Divinity*, the first of the two intimate and personal works in which Donne's mysticism might be expected to have free scope for expression, one is here almost compelled to accept the judgment of Gosse.

There is no revelation here of the writer's personal experience; nothing is for edification. These short homilies are more like the notes of a theological professor who is lecturing on Genesis and the early chapters of Exodus, than the outpourings of a man who is trembling on the threshold of the Holy of Holies. There is a total absence of unction, even of spiritual enthusiasm; the essays are scholastic exercises and no more. It seems to me likely that they were written to be laid before the Archbishop as a proof of the soundness of Donne's orthodoxy and the breadth of his learning, both of which they eminently illustrate.⁴²

Certainly Keynes's mild protest against Gosse's *dictum*⁴³ cannot disguise the fact that one searches vainly in these *Essayes* for that inspired dismay peculiar to the spirit which has been suddenly overwhelmed by a revelation too prodigious for the human mind and too dazzling for the human heart to comprehend; or for some testimony to the inadequacy of the natural powers of the intellect for the task of embracing the Infinite—such testimony as for the mediaeval mystic was almost invariably a concomitant of his testimony to his surrender to the vision, freely vouchsafed, of the splendour of the Divine Nature. On the contrary, one finds a steady plodding forward from enthymeme to enthymeme. By way of illustration I choose two passages devoted to subjects which naturally lend themselves to mystic speculation. The first is his meditation "Of God."

Men which seek God by reason, and naturall strength, (though we do not deny common notions and generall impressions of a sovereign power) are like Mariners which voyaged before the invention of the Compass, which were but Costers, and unwillingly left the sight of the land. Such are they which would arrive at God by this world, and contemplate him onely in his Creatures, and seeming Demonstration. Certainly, every Creature shewes God, as a glass, but glimmeringly and transitorily, [sic] by the frailty both of the receiver, and beholder: Our selves have his Image, as Medals,

⁴² *Op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 63.

⁴³ Geoffrey Keynes, *A Bibliography of Dr. John Donne*. Cambridge: At the University Press, 1932, p. 76.

permanently and preciously delivered. But by these meditations we get no further then to know what he *doth*, not what he *is*. But as by the use of the Compass, men safely dispatch *Ulysses* dangerous ten years travell in so many dayes, and have found out a new world richer than the old; so doth Faith, as soon as our hearts are touched with it, direct and inform it in that great search of the discovery of Gods Essence, and the new *Hierusalem*, which Reason durst not attempt. And though the faithfullest heart is not ever directly, & constantly upon God, but that it sometimes descends also to Reason; yet it is thereby so departed from him, but that it still looks towards him, though not fully to him: as the Compass is ever Northward though it decline, and have often variations towards East and West. By this faith, as by reason, I know, that God is all that which all men can say of all Good; I believe he is somewhat which no man can say nor know. For, *si scirem quid deus esset, Deus essem*. For all acquired knowledge is by degrees, and successive, but God is impartible, and only faith which can receive it all at once, can comprehend him. Canst thou then, O my soul, when faith hath extended and enlarged thee, not as wind doth a bladder (which is the nature of humane learning) but as God hath dislaid the Curtain of the firmament, and more spaciouly; for thou comprehendest that, and him which comprehends it: Canst thou be satisfied with such a late knowledg of God, as is gathered from *effects*; when even reason, which feeds upon the crums and fragments of appearances and verisimilitudes, requires *causes*? Canst thou rely and leane upon so infirm a knowledg, as is delivered by negations? And because a devout speculative man hath said *Negationes de Deo sunt verae, affirmationes autem sunt inconvenientes*, will it serve thy turn, to hear, that God is that which cannot be named, cannot be comprehended, or which is nothing else?⁴⁴

The second is a part of his meditation on the Mercy of God as shown in the delivery of the Israelites from the bondage of Egypt.

Go one step lower, that is higher, and nearer to God, O my soul, in this Meditation, and thou shalt see, that even in this moment, when he affords thee these thoughts, he delivers thee from an Egypt of dulness and stupidity. As often as he moves thee to pray to be delivered from the Egypt of sin, he delivers thee. And as often as thou promisest him not to return thither, he delivers thee. Thou hast delivered me O God from the Egypt of confidence and presumption, by interrupting my fortunes, and intercepting my hopes; And from the Egypt of despair by contemplation of thine abundant treasures, and my portion therein; from the Egypt of lust, by confining my affections; and from the monstrous and unnaturall Egypt of painfull and wearisome idleness, by the necessities of domestick and familiar cares and duties. Yet as an Eagle, though she enjoy her wing and beak, is wholly prisoner, if she be held by but one talon; so are we, though we could be delivered of all habit of sin, in bondage still, if Vanity hold us but by a silken thred. But, O God, as mine inward corruptions have made me mine

⁴⁴ *Paradoxes, Problemes, Essayes, Characters* . . . London: Printed by T.N. for Humphrey Moseley, 1652, pp. 37-40.

own *Pharaoh*, and mine own *Egypt*; so thou, by the inhabitation of thy Spirit, and application of thy merit, hast made me mine own Christ; and contenting thy self with being my own Medicine, allowest me to be my Physician. Lastly, descend, O my soul, to the very Center, which is the very Pole, (for in infinite things, incapable of distinction of parts, Highest and lowest are all one) and consider to what a land of promise, and heavenly Hierusalem God will at last bring thee, from the Egypt of this world & the most Egyptiacal part, this flesh. God is so abundantly true, that he ever performes his wordes more then once. And therefore, as he hath fulfilled that promise, *Out of Egypt have I called my Son*; so will he also perform it in every one of his elect; and as when *Herod* dyed, his Angell appeared to *Joseph in Egypt in a dream*, to call him thence; So when our persecutor, our flesh shall dy, and the slumber of death shall overtake us in this our *Egypt* His Angels sent from Heaven, or his Angels newly created in us, (which are good desires of that dissolution,) or his Ministeriall Angels in his militant Church shall call and invite us from this *Egypt* to that *Canaan*. Between which (as the Israelites did) we must pass a desert; a disunion and divorce of our body and soul, and a solitude of the grave. In which, the faithful and discreet prayers of them which stay behind, may much advantage and benefit us, and themselves, if thereby God may be moved to hasten that judgment which shall set open Heavens greater gates, at which our Bodes may enter, and to consummate and accomplish our salvation.⁴⁵

But if the *Essayes* are obviously far removed from the spirit of mysticism, there have been those from Donne's own time to the present who have insisted on the mystical colouring of the *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions*. This work was composed during the author's convalescence from a severe illness which confined him to his bed during the last months of the year 1623. Thus, coming almost a decade later than the *Essayes*, when his wife had been dead for six years, and when his own health, long a matter of concern for him, had reached a critical stage, this volume would seem ideally suited to reveal that detachment from worldly ties, that waiving of temporal enticements as but a grain of sand in the balance of eternity which is the *sine qua non* of the mystic search. To the praise of Walton later admirers of this work have added little of significance:

... as his strength increased, so did his thankfulness to Almighty God, testified in his most excellent Book of Devotions, which he published at his recovery; in which the reader may see the most secret thoughts that then possessed his soul, paraphrased and made public; a book, that may not unfitly be called a Sacred Picture of Spiritual Ecstasies, occasioned and appliable to the emergencies of that sickness; which book, being a composition of Meditations, Disquisitions, and Prayers, he writ on his sick-bed;

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 165-168.

herein imitating the holy Patriarchs, who were wont to build their altars in that place where they had received their blessings.⁴⁶

The impartial critic will not deny that there is far more of spiritual unction in the *Devotions* than in any other of Donne's writing, with the possible exception of one or two of the *Holy Sonnets*. Among the most fervent passages is the close of the twentieth Expostulation:

I will fill this *Cup of compunction*, as full as I have formerly filled the *Cups* of worldly *confections*, that so I may scape the *cup* of *Malediction*, and irrecoverable destruction that depends upon that. And since thy blessed and glorious Sonne, being offered in the way to his *Execution*, a Cup of *Stupefaction*, to take away the sense of his paine, (a charity afforded to condemned persons ordinarily in those places, and times) refused that *ease*, and embraced the whole *torment*, I take not this *Cup*, but this vessell of mine owne *sinnes*, into my *contemplation*, and I powre them out here according to the *Motions* of thy *holy Spirit*, and *any where*, according to the Ordinances of thy *holy Church*.⁴⁷

With this may well be considered the close of the seventh Meditation, with its emphasis on charity:

How many are sicker (perchance) then I, and laid on their woful straw at home (if that corner be a home) and have no more hope of helpe, though they die, then of preferment, though they live? Nor doe no more expect to see a *Phisician* then, then to bee an *officer* after; of whome, the first that takes knowledge, is the Sexten that buries them; who buries them in *oblivion* too? For they doe but fill up the number of the dead in the Bill, but we shall never hear their *Names*, till wee reade them in the Booke of life, with our owne. How many are sicker (perchance) then I, and thrown into Hospitals, where, (as a fish left upon the Sand, must stay the tide) they must stay the Phisicians houre of visiting, and then can bee but visited? How many are sicker (perchance) then all we, and have not this Hospitall to cover them, not this straw, to lie in, to die in, but have their Gravestone under them, and breathe out the soules in the eares, and in the eies of passengers, harder then their bed, the flint of the street? That taste of no part of our *Phisick* but a *sparing dyet*; to whom ordinary porridge would bee *Julip* enough, the refuse of our servants, *Bezar enough*, and the off-scouring of our Kitchen tables, *Cordiall* enough. O my *soule*, when thou art not enough awake, to blesse thy *God* enough for his plentifull mercy, in affording thee many Helpers, remember how many lacke them, and helpe them to them, or to those other things, which they lacke as much as them.⁴⁸

Yet admirable as these passages are in themselves they hardly exhibit the presence of the mystic spirit. Pious and devout, they testify

⁴⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 91.

⁴⁷ *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions*. Ed. by John Sparrow. Cambridge: At the University Press, 1923, pp. 124-125.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

to the importance of religious experience in Donne's life—an importance which a seventeenth century divine writing from a sickbed could scarcely fail to stress. They do not, however, reveal the mystic's utter forgetfulness of self, his utter surrender to the Divine Will which marks the initial step in the entrance on the purgative way.

If it would perhaps be unfair to compare Donne's *Meditations* with the spiritual communings of a St. Theresa or a St. John of the Cross, it is certainly permissible to test his mystical propensities by the words of one who came from the same stock as he, who, though born three decades later, survived him by only two years—Dame Gertrude More, the nun of Cambray. Dame Gertrude (Helen) was the daughter of Crisacre More, a great grandson of the author of the *Utopia*. Born in 1606 (the time of the Mitcham residence and near nadir of her distant relative's career) she was one of a group of nine English women, who at Christmas time, 1623, received the Benedictine habit at Cambray. Dying ten years later, she left behind her spiritual meditations, which were published in 1658. Thus her *Confessiones Amantis*, written in the same decade as the *Devotions* and by one whose natural affinity toward mysticism would not have been much different from Donne's, forms a natural subject for comparison with the latter.

Without prior comment it may be interesting to quote here Donne's third "Meditation" for comparison with Dame Gertrude's thirty-sixth "Confession."

Wee attribute but one priviledge and advantage to Mans body, above other moving creatures, that he is not as others, groveling, but of an erect, of an upright form, naturally built, and disposed to the contemplation of *Heaven*. Indeed it is a thankfull forme, and recompences that *soule*, which gives it, with carrying that soule so many foot higher, towards *heaven*. Other creatures look to the *earth*; and even that is no unfit object, no unfit contemplation for *Man*; for thither hee must come; but because, *Man* is not to stay there, as other creatures are, *Man* in his naturall forme, is carried to the contemplation of that place, which is his *home*, *Heaven*. This is Mans prerogative; but what state hath he in this *dignitie*? A fever can fillip him downe, a fever can depose him; a fever can bring that head, which yesterday carried a *crown* of gold, five foot towards a *crown* of glory, as low as his own foot, today. When *God* came to breath into *Man* the breath of life, he found him flat upon the ground; when he comes to withdraw that breath from him againe, hee prepares him to it, by laying him flat upon his bed. Scarce any prison so close, that affords not the prisoner two, or three steps. The *Anchorites* that barqu'd themselves up in hollowe trees, and immur'd themselves in hollow walls; that perverse man, that barrell'd him-

selfe in a Tubb, all could stand, or sit, and enjoy some change of posture. A sicke bed, is a grave; and all that the patient saies there, is but a varying of his owne *Epitaph*. Every nights bed is a *Type* of the *grave*: At night wee tell our servants at what houre wee will rise; here we cannot tell our selves, at what day, what week, what moneth. Here the head lies as low as the foot; the *Head* of the people, as lowe as they, whome those feete trod upon; And that hande that signed Pardons, is too weake to begge his owne, if hee might have it for lifting up that hand: Strange fetters to the feete, strange Manacles to the hands, when the feete, and handes are bound so much the faster, by how much the coards are slacker; So much the lesse able to doe their Offices, by how much more the Sinewes and Ligaments are the looser. In the *Grave* I may speak through the stones, in the voice of my friends, and in the accent of those wordes, which their love may afford my memory: Here I am mine owne *Ghost*, and rather affright my beholders, then instruct them; they conceive the worst of me now, and yet feare worse; they give me for dead now, and yet wonder how I doe, when they wake at midnight, and aske how I doe to morrow. Miserable and, (though common to all) inhuman *posture*, where I must practise my lying in the *grave*, by lying still, and not practice my *Resurrection*, by rising any more.⁴⁹

The thirty-sixth "Confession" follows:

O my Lord, to Thee I will speak, to Whom nevertheless the secrets of my heart are otherwise most clearly manifest—to Thee I will speak, and upon Thee I will call. If thou wilt, my Lord, Thou canst save me. This day, my Lord God it is read of Thee in Holy Church that Thou didst heal the man sick of the palsy. Let me also find grace before Thee, that my diseases may by Thee be cured, that so I may become pleasing to Thee. For the diseases of the mind in which I languish are much more grievous than those of the body: for these make us but distasteful to men, but the others make us displeasing in Thine eyes. But thy goodness (as it is seen in this example) together with the cure of the one, did also avail to grant pardon for the other; for Thou didst say to him: "Thy sins are forgiven thee," by which he became cured in body and soul. This Thy mercy I remember with great joy and comfort, and falling down at Thy feet, my Lord, I beg of Thee that Thou wilt be merciful to me a sinner for Thy own sake, and say unto my soul: "Thy sins are forgiven thee." And grant that I may now begin to live to Thee, that so, by Thy grace, all impediments may be removed that hinder me from loving Thee as Thou wouldst be loved by men, which is all I wish or desire. To this end I fly to Thee; to this end I sigh after Thee only wishing and desiring that in all things Thy holy will may be perfectly accomplished in me for time and eternity. If I should not hourly approach to Thee Who art the only true Light, darkness and the shadow of death would overwhelm me and make me incapable of this Thy light which leadeth to the true love of Thee. Oh! how happy were I if I could truly say, "*Anima mea in manibus meis semper*" ("My soul is always in my hands"),

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 10–11.

that so my soul might truly hear and follow what my Lord speaketh to my heart, for Thy words are works. Oh! give me a true contempt of myself, that I may die to all the world esteemeth or desireth. For I find where I seek myself there I am caught, as it were, in a snare, and where I forsake myself there I become more and more capable of that true liberty of spirit which carrieth the soul above herself and all created things, that she may more perfectly be united to Thee. For this is Thy will—that by true abnegation of ourselves in all things, both external and internal, and by a total subjection to Thee, both as concerns ourselves and all others, in anything that can be wished by us, we should enjoy a certain Divine, heavenly peace amidst the crosses, passions, contradictions, and changes which are incidental to our life in this warfare of ours. For the more sound a soul is in the practice of this doctrine of Thine, of denying herself in all and following Thee, by proposing no other end to herself in anything but Thyself alone, the more she getteth, as I may say, her soul into her hands, and the less is she moved in all things that happen, either without her or within her. For she seeth and knoweth that such have ever been Thy practice and permissions about crosses and difficulties falling upon souls—namely that Thine intention in all was and is that of necessity the soul must suffer, and thereby become disposed, and in some sort worthy to enter into Thy kingdom. . . .⁵⁰

To the reader who carefully compares these passages it becomes almost immediately evident that while both are meditations on man's subjection to sickness and disease, Dame Gertrude makes a quick transition from the matter of physical debility to the, for her, infinitely more significant subject of spiritual ill-health, of which physical decay is but a symbol. In Donne's meditation, on the other hand, one does not so much see a devout soul bowing patiently before affliction as one envisions the Renaissance intellectual mournfully discovering in the heart of the rose, in the bottom of the cup, in the palsyng of his own nerves, the tell-tale evidences of mortality. There is something theatrical about this toying with the idea of death which foreshadows the shroud of the last days—as if here were a grim and titanic jest at human destiny. The explanation of that particular renaissance phenomenon is no matter for an idle paragraph, but it is perhaps not irrelevant to suggest in passing, that it had its counterpart in the inditing of his essays, "Of Friendship" and "Of Ambition," by the Bacon of the Essex trial and the bribery debacle.

Two other passages from these same works furnish an interesting basis for comparison. Here are the final lines of Donne's fourth "Expostulation":

⁵⁰ *The Inner Life and The Writings of Dame Gertrude More*. Revised and edited by Dom Benedict Weld-Blundell. London: R. & T. Washbourne, Ltd., 1911, Vol. II, pp. 102-104.

Reveale therefore to me thy *Method*, O Lord, and see, whether I have followed it; that thou mayest have glory, if I have, and I pardon, if I have not, and helpe that I may. Thy *Method* is, *In time of thy sicknesse, be not negligent*: Wherein wilt thou have my diligence expressed? *Pray unto the Lord, and hee will make thee whole*. O Lord, I doe; I pray, and pray thy servant *Dauids* prayer, *Have mercy upon mee, O Lord, for I am weake; Heale mee, O Lord, for my bones are vexed*: I knowe, that even my weaknesse is a reason, a motive, to induce thy mercie, and my sicknes an occasion of thy sending health. When art thou so readie, when is it so seasonable to thee, to commiserate, as in miserie? But is Prayer for health in season, as soone as I am sicke? Thy *Method* goes further; *Leave off from sinne, and order thy handes aright, and cleanse thy heart from all wickednesse*; Have I, O Lord, done so? O Lord, I have; by thy Grace, I am come to a holy detestation of my former sin; Is there any more? In thy *Methode* there is more; *Give a sweet savor, and a memoriall of fine flower, and make a fat offering, as not being*. And, Lord, by thy grace, I have done that, sacrificed a little, of that little which thou lentst me, to them, for whom thou lentst it: and now in thy *Method*, and by thy steps, I am come to that, *Then give place to the Phisician, for the Lord hath created him, let him not goe from thee, for thou hast need of him*. I send for the *Phisician*, but I will heare him enter with these words of *Peter*, *Jesus Christ maketh thee whole*; I long for his presence, but I look *that the power of the Lord, should bee present to heale mee*.⁶¹

Now follows Dame Gertrude's fifty-second "Confession":

O my Lord and my God, if none have many sins forgiven them but those that love much, what will become of me? This day we read in our Office that St. Mary Magdalene, coming to Thy feet (which she watered with her tears), heard that comforting answer from Thee—to wit: "Go in peace; thy sins are forgiven thee." But it was on this account that she loved much. This answer which Thou madest to her, whose heart in silence spoke unto Thee, doth much comfort my sinful soul. But yet, when I remember how void I am of what was a necessary disposition for her soul to hear those comforting words, "Go in peace; thy sins are forgiven thee," it draweth teares from mine eyes to see how far my soul is destitute of that pure love which prevaieth with Thy Divine Majesty. What shall I say? What shall I do? or wherein shall I hope? I am not fit to plead for myself; my sins, indeed, are so many and so great, and as for the love which only Thou desirest, behold my soul is destitute of it. For if I have any love towards Thee, my God, it is but a sensible, childish love, a love little beseeeming such a God, Who is all good, beauty, wisdom—yea, even Goodness and Love itself—to Whom is due a love which is able to suffer all things, for this love is a strong love, more strong than death itself. Such kind of love is far from me, who am blown down with the least blast of temptation, and cannot endure any disgrace, desolation, or difficulty whatsoever, as beseems a true lover of His. But, notwithstanding my poverty and misery, yet I

⁶¹ *Devotions*, pp. 19–20.

will hope in Him Who is Mercy itself, and will approach His feet. There my Lord and my God, I will in silence sigh and weep, both for my sins and for my defect in loving Thee, Who art worthy of all love and praise whatsoever. There I will beg this love so much to be desired; there I will wish and long for it, and from Thy feet I will not depart till Thou proclaim to me, "Thy sins are forgiven thee," and sayest to my soul, "Go in peace." This voice I long to hear in my heart, that I may with the voice of exultation praise Thee for ever. Amen.⁵²

There is something unpleasantly pharasaical about the assertions of self-righteousness and self-amendment in the "Expostulation"—a too confident self-possession apt to jar even nerves not unduly sensitive. But that, I think, is only one aspect of the central significance of the passage. Here where the naked, shivering soul is ostensibly brought, by way of meditation, into the presence of God, the author all unconsciously gives testimony to the reality of that most far-reaching of Renaissance phenomena—the discovery of self. Re-read in the light of that suggestion, Donne's words indicate sufficiently how far he was from that supreme and final self-abandonment which is the one condition without which there can be no entrance upon the purgative way. The ambitious churchman in whose memory were stored recollections of the early London days of gayety and dissipation, of the soldiering experiences of 1596 and 1597, of the courtly years with Sir Thomas Egerton, and of the desperate and unavailing struggle in the first decade and a half of the new century to gain a foothold in the world of politics, calmly announces the success of his spiritual pilgrimage. The nun, on the other hand, who, at the age of seventeen, left a wealthy home and cultured environment to seek the way of perfection in a poor religious community in an alien land, finds even the love which animated her self-renouncement, "a sensible, childish love," all unworthy of the "Goodness and Love" it sought. It is obviously the latter mood which leads to the attainment of the mystical quest strictly understood.

Donne, then, is not, I think a mystic by any standard which his own age would have applied to him. In its origins and in the major phases of its development, western mysticism is mediaeval and Donne's name is an important one in the flight from mediaevalism. His work, on a hundred pages, gives evidence of the fatal conflict current (but already decided) in his own time between mediaevalism and Renaissance Humanism; a conflict whose consequences were to

⁵² *Op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 138-140.

cripple Donne as an artist and to leave an indelible impress on the subsequent history of English letters. But that is not to say that Donne had no natural aptitude for the mystic way. The truth, I feel, is that Donne, a poet by nature, was also a mystic by nature. The conflict between mediaeval and Renaissance aesthetics as I have earlier suggested, irreparably divided his artistic powers. No less effectively did the conflict between mediaeval and Renaissance ethics rend his mystic propensities. And just as the Puritan spirit caused Donne, the theologian, to deny the possibility of a synthesis of flesh and spirit which Donne, the poet, on occasion instinctively accepted and affirmed, so did the rationalistic spirit close to the theologian the avenues of mystical experience to which the poet's intuition was an open sesame.

CHAPTER VII

IN THE WAKE OF DONNE

STRANGE, unhappy, at war with himself and with his cultural heritage—religious, aesthetic, mystic—which, try as he would at times, he could not entirely reject, the figure of Donne remains one of the most enigmatic in the history of English poetry. The loose designation of this sombre genius as the leader of the “metaphysical school” has done much to obscure his real significance as a literary influence. The English Muse has ever had an antipathy for “schools,” a generalization to which Donne affords no exception:

The line of the Metaphysicals in the seventeenth century becomes distinct in the influence of poet upon poet, deriving more or less directly from Donne, but remaining a thing of Individuals rather than of a school, till it attains something like critical consciousness in the mind of Dryden. Nowhere else in the criticism of the century shall we find a hint of a school of poets headed by Donne, much less of the Metaphysical school.¹

But if Donne founded no school, his influence was for that very reason the more pervasive. For a school connotes restrictions—the adherence of a particular group of principles, the allegiance of a small group of devotees, the devotion of an esoteric cult of worshippers. The figure of Donne, on the contrary, bulks too large to be confined in any such circumscribed manner. His “school” is, in reality, made up not alone of the Herberts, Marvel, King, Carew, Vaughan, Cowley, Townshend, and other lesser poets of his own century. If I am not entirely mistaken, his troubled accents have fixed the mood in which by far the majority of English poets since his day have sung.

T. S. Eliot has suggested that perhaps there is, after all, no break between Donne and the Elizabethans:

If so shrewd and sensitive (though so limited) a critic as Johnson failed to define metaphysical poetry by its faults, it is worth while to inquire whether we may not have more success by adopting the opposite method: by assuming that the poets of the seventeenth century (up to the Revolution) were the direct and normal development of the precedent age; and without prejudicing their case by the adjective “metaphysical” consider whether their virtue was not something permanently valuable, which subsequently disappeared, but ought not to have disappeared.²

¹ Williamson, *The Donne Tradition*, p. 75.

² “Metaphysical Poets,” *Selected Essays, 1917-1932*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1932, p. 245.

But to assume "that the poets of the seventeenth century (up to the Revolution) were the direct and normal development of the precedent age" must lead, I think, to a conclusion as false as that other assumption that the substance of what Donne had to bestow upon English poetry was a series of mannerisms ultimately deriving from a dying civilization. Each is an attempt to place a static interpretation upon one of the most dynamic of personalities. The true place of Donne in the history of English poetry will be found only by seeing in him the man in whom, more than in any other, the transition from mediaevalism to modernism in English letters was achieved.

All too easy is it for our vision, blurred by the lapse of more than three hundred years, to lose sight of the conflict which waged in sensitive and intelligent souls during the decades when the world of the Middle Ages was receding and the world as we know it was being born. But it is not hard for the critical reader to see that Donne was broken by the struggle. The "high note of joy" is not found in his poetry as it is in Milton's—for Milton who came when the struggle had been determined had no personal feeling of reverence and regret for the great age whose ruins lay all about him. The native note of Donne, on the contrary, is characteristically decadent. Between the lines of the gayest and the boldest of his lyrics it is not idly imaginative to catch a Dowsonesque echo breaking through, for though he is never maudlin as is the singer of "Cynara," he is nevertheless fain to confess a kindred weariness, to admit the eternal imminence of the latter's sentiment: "Our viols cease, our wine is death, our roses fail."

The consequences of Donne's impact upon English poetry will not be found then by confining one's study to the influence, direct or indirect, of the "*concetti metafisici ed ideali*," of "the more intellectual, less verbal character" of his wit, of "the finer psychology" of his conceits, of "the argumentative, subtle evolution" of his lyrics, or of "the peculiar blend of passion and thought, feeling and ratiocination," which Professor Grierson has so ably set forth as the touchstones of the metaphysical style. Behind these external traits, these mannerisms of Donne, some of which, Professor Grierson has been quick to point out, were not original with Donne at all,³ lay the heart of the Donne manner, which has, I think, scarcely been sufficiently appreciated.

Most critics have held that Donne is outside the prevailing tradition of English poetry—a delightful or an irritating interlude de-

³ *Metaphysical Lyrics & Poems of the Seventeenth Century, Donne to Butler*, p. xx.

pending upon one's point of view. Thus Williamson, touches on Dryden's indebtedness to Donne:

If Dryden's youth thus reveals the influence of Donne, and if that influence never quite died out in him, it was Jonson's discipline of conscious art that became the master of Dryden's maturity. This discipline was in harmony with the Neo-classical influence which came from France at this time and earned the rather Jesuitical suffrage of Dryden. Furthermore, the structure of the Restoration sensibility required such a discipline of reason, order, and conscious art, as we have seen in its new esthetics. Hence, the reasons for the depression of Donne were just those which guaranteed the rise of Jonson: the qualities in which Donne differed from Jonson were going out of style, and were to remain out of favor as long as classicism kept its hold on English literature. This change in the structure of the English sensibility is all that prevented the current of poetry from descending in a direct line from the Metaphysicals, as it had descended in a direct line to them. Even so late as the Restoration the influence of Donne was irresistible to many poets, but no influence was powerful enough to controvert a sensibility that revised Shakespeare. The times were favorable to Jonson, with certain reservations. Almost the whole truth is that the Elizabethan age descended to the Restoration through Jonson.⁴

Here Williamson agrees with Eliot that Donne and the metaphysicals were a part of the main current of English poetry as it was constituted up to their time, but he insists that a "change in the structure of the English sensibility" in the age of Dryden so altered the direction of that current that Donne and his compeers were left as literary fossils along a deserted shore.

Despite the weight which attaches to the opinions of such critics I cannot agree with their conclusions. My own study of Donne has convinced me that he neither descends in a direct line from the Elizabethans (although Eliot's suggestion is valuable in that it serves as an antidote to the common assumption that Donne is entirely unsympathetic with these poets), nor is he, on the other hand, divorced from the central tradition of English poetry from the Restoration downward. He is, rather, a transitional figure, who stands between two poetic worlds, as surely as he stood between two cultural worlds. He was born in the one, he became a zealot, a standard-bearer of the other. His generation saw the change from the "Merrie Englande" of the Middle Ages, which still persisted in the England of the Elizabethans, to the modern England which was to be made articulate by Milton and Dryden, by Pope and Johnson, by Tennyson, Browning,

⁴ *The Donne Tradition*, p. 222.

and Meredith. That change was far-reaching in the political, economic, and religious spheres, but it was not less so in the world of letters. And while it is flying in the face of accepted opinion to do so, I hope it may not appear foolhardy to suggest that the aesthetics of Donne supply the source of those guiding principles to which through subsequent centuries the vast majority of English-speaking practitioners of the poetic art have been true. I would not be thought here to be insisting on the weight of Donne's personal influence. The study of personal influence in the world of letters is always a vexing one and rarely leads to satisfactory conclusions. I prefer rather to point out the significance of Donne as a literary weather-vane who shows the way in which the poetic winds were blowing. In the light of this attitude toward him, the infrequency of his publication between the Restoration and Grosart's edition of 1872-73 is of little significance.

That Donne, as an individual, points the direction which a nation was taking, Eliot himself has clearly seen:

A poet like Donne, or like Baudelaire, or Laforgue, may almost be considered the inventor of an attitude, a system of feeling or of morals. Donne is difficult to analyze: what appears at one time a curious personal point of view may at another time appear rather the precise concentration of a kind of feeling diffused in the air about him.⁵

No happier view of Donne could be taken than one which sees in him "the precise concentration of a kind of feeling diffused in the air about him." That feeling to which Eliot has reference I take to be of an aesthetic nature and it has, I think, continued to permeate the air of English poetry since Donne's time, although to hazard such a judgment is to oppose Williamson, who sees the end of Donne's direct influence (until the dawn of Romanticism) as a consequence of the proclamation of the rationalistic aesthetic of Hobbes and its further development by Dryden.⁶ The fullness of Williamson's view

⁵ "Andrew Marvell," *Selected Essays, 1917-1932*, p. 251.

⁶ "With perfect adequacy of statement as the ideal of poetry, it is easy to see what will happen to Donne. Adequacy will triumph till we have the language of Dryden, whose denotation is immense but whose suggestiveness is almost nothing.

"The blow, however, that was to prove fatal to Donne's reputation as a poet was Hobbes' dissection of the imagination: 'Time and Education begets experience; Experience begets memory; Memory begets Judgement and Fancy; Judgement begets the strength and structure, and Fancy begets the ornaments of a Poem.' Thus imagination is no longer central and vital in the poetic process, but merely an adjunct to it, for Hobbes ignores the transforming power of the imagination for the sake of the recording power. In his *Leviathan* he makes his famous

is, of course, appreciated only when it is added that he holds Dryden to be indebted to Donne for his not infrequent use of conceits, for the scientific figure, for the "scholastic" architecture of his verse, and perhaps for his ratiocinative qualities.

In rebuttal of Williamson's dictum, which is a not inadequate summary of the prevailing critical opinion concerning Donne's position in the history of English poetry, I offer, first of all, his own admirable epitome of the transition from Elizabethanism to Neo-classicism:

The Elizabethan conceit as used by Sir Philip Sidney was essentially decorative, primarily suggestive in its function, designed to throw a nebula of pretty light over its object. The Metaphysical conceit adventured in a new direction: it refused nothing in its intense desire for expression; it sought whatever would make its feeling precise, whatever would interpret reality and the darkest recesses of the mind. Being intent upon exact and compelling expression, it became careless of the suggestive power of words in its eagerness to state the new conquest of learning and experience, of the subtleties of mind and heart. When these motives disappeared, the language became hollow and merely ingenious; with the deep thoughts gone the images were simply reprehensible. Since these images had been peculiarly scientific and primarily denotative in purpose, their suggestions became shocking or ludicrous when their thoughtfulness disappeared. Finally, in Dryden the denotative tendency persists, with the added impulse to suppress suggestiveness or *magic* altogether. In short, the theory is that imagination is supreme in the Elizabethan image, that imagination and reason are contending in the Metaphysical image, and that reason is supreme in the Neo-classical image.⁷

To this I would add Eliot's penetrating analysis of the historical "dissociation of sensibility" in English verse:

The poets of the seventeenth century, the successors of the dramatists

distinction between wit and judgment, which Professor Spingarn summarizes in these words: "'wit," the current term for fancy, denotes quickness of mind in seeing the resemblances between disparate objects; judgement, or reason, finds differences in objects apparently similar.' Hobbes concludes that 'Judgment therefore without fancy is wit, but fancy without judgment, not.' In Hobbes the supremacy of judgment is already patent; and it was to increase in authority until Dryden could define wit as 'a propriety of thoughts and words,' in which the element of fancy is entirely lost. When we remember that for Donne wit was a kind of intellectual imaginativeness, we can see how far we have come. With such a revolution in esthetics it is not surprising that imagination came to be regarded as little more than a frisky faculty, and even by Hobbes as 'decaying sense.'

"Before judgment became the great arbiter of poetry, Donne was still admired for his wit, though in the sense of the quick perception of similarity in difference; that is, ingenuity. For Donne was witty in this sense also. But when the new esthetics had come to dominate poetry, Donne, when he was remembered, could only be remembered for what suffered least by this change of taste—his satire. Only when men revised their idea of the imagination could Donne recover a genuine hold upon the interests of readers, and that time did not come till Wordsworth and Coleridge." *The Donne Tradition*, pp. 213-215. ⁷ *Op. cit.*, pp. 225-226.

of the sixteenth, possessed a mechanism of sensibility which could devour any kind of experience. They are simple, artificial, difficult, or fantastic, as their predecessors were; no less nor more than Dante, Guido Cavalcanti, Guinicelli, or Cino. In the seventeenth century a dissociation of sensibility set in, from which we have never recovered; and this dissociation, as is natural, was aggravated by the influence of the two most powerful poets of the century, Milton and Dryden. Each of these men performed certain poetic functions so magnificently well that the magnitude of the effect concealed the absence of others. The language went on and in some respects improved; the best verse of Collins, Gray, Johnson, and even Goldsmith satisfies some of our fastidious demands better than that of Donne or Marvell or King. But while the language became more refined, the feeling became more crude. The feeling, the sensibility, expressed in the *Country Churchyard* (to say nothing of Tennyson and Browning) is cruder than that in the *Coy Mistress*.

The second effect of the influence of Milton and Dryden followed from the first, and was therefore slow in manifestation. The Sentimental age began early in the eighteenth century, and continued. The poets revolted against the ratiocinative, the descriptive; they thought and felt by fits, unbalanced; they reflected. In one or two passages of Shelley's *Triumph of Life*, in the second *Hyperion*, there are traces of a struggle toward unification of sensibility. But Keats and Shelley died, and Tennyson and Browning ruminated.⁸

Here then are important facts: first, the evolution of the imaginative image of the Elizabethans through the imaginative-rational image of the Metaphysicals into the rational image of the Neo-classicists; secondly, the divorce within the poet of his intellectual and sensory powers. Moreover, these phenomena as traced by the critics were of simultaneous appearance. It is extremely natural to inquire what caused them and what, if any, was the relationship between them.

In earlier chapters I have placed much stress upon the conflict which arose in the mind and heart of the typical Renaissance artist between the rival and irreconcilable claims of the sacramental idealism, which was the soul of the mediaeval aesthetic thought, and the exaggerated naturalism which came in with the new age. The rejection of the mediaeval aesthetic and the failure to regain the "pure and primitive perceptions of the early mytho-poets" (a failure foredoomed by the persistence of the shadow of that "mystical and metaphysical cloud" which a Christian consciousness could not escape) gave rise to the spirit of artistic Puritanism and to all the consequences of that spirit. Now Donne, as I have tried to indicate, was

⁸ "Metaphysical Poets," *Selected Essays*, 1917-1932, pp. 247-248.

no *Renaissancemensch*. However wayward, however daring his fancies on occasion may be, there is ever evident the uneasiness, the weariness, the disillusionment, which prophesy the forthcoming religious poems and the sermons. What was the effect of that internal struggle on Donne's art? As I have suggested in the discussion of his poetry, it was, I believe, responsible for the intensity which is perhaps the cardinal quality of his verse. But even iron nerves could not for long withstand the tension which the conflict generated. So when the mind and heart of the poet were weary of the struggle, when the first appeal of an excessive naturalism had worn off, a revulsion against the senses and the turmoil which they introduced into life set in. Here, I think, is the psychological explanation for the "dissociation of sensibility" which Eliot laments. The problem involved, let it be observed, was not, at least not primarily, one of the morals. Chaucer and even "moral" Gower venture where the poets of the seventeenth century would never have dared to go. It is, to recall Fausset's words, rather one of aesthetic perspective:

The old joy of the senses, the old care-free innocence of instinct was tarnished because man had begun to be self-conscious and to exploit the material of life to his own hurt and to the disturbing of Nature's economy. He had discovered how consciously to abuse and criticize the physical impulses which before he had almost unthinkingly accepted.⁹

The transition from Elizabethanism to Neo-classicism is fundamentally a transition from the instinctive to the rational. It is hardly true to say that Neo-classical poetry is more intellectual than Elizabethan; one would hesitate to say that Dryden's was a greater mind than Shakespeare's. The difference between the two is at bottom one of emphasis. And while the example of the French effort, under the Grand Monarch, to recapture the poised serenity, the impeccable decorum, of the great ages of Greece and Rome furnished a partial motivation for the Neo-classical stress on the rational side of poetry, perhaps not less significant was the infiltration of the Puritan ideology through which men had come to suspect the senses and the emotions—or at least to be nauseatingly aware of them. How far Donne went in abstracting sense material from his verse—how far the best of his achievements are the result of a subtle process of intellectual distillation, I have already pointed out. Herein, most certainly, he was already well on the way toward the fundamental trait of Neo-classicism.

⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. 147.

The mannerisms of the Metaphysicals indeed went out of fashion. Dryden's censure of Cowley was but a summary of what his age and the succeeding century thought of Donne as well as of the last of his direct disciples.

One of our late great poets is sunk in his reputation, because he could never forgive any conceit which came in his way; but swept like a drag-net, great and small. There was plenty enough but the dishes were ill-sorted; whole pyramids of sweetmeats for boys and women, but little of solid meat for men. All this proceeded not from any want of knowledge, but of judgment. Neither did he want that in discerning the beauties and faults of other poets, but only indulged himself in the luxury of writing; and perhaps knew it was a fault, but hoped the reader would not find it. For this reason, though he must always be thought a great poet, he is no longer esteemed a good writer; and for ten impressions, which his works have had in so many successive years, yet at present a hundred books are scarcely purchased once a twelve-month.¹⁰

But that passage did not, as Williamson thinks, alienate Donne from the main tradition of English poetry. The mannerisms passed but the manner remained, and the essence of the Donne manner, born as it was of the conflict which filled his life, was the rejection of the mediaeval synthesis of flesh and spirit, of sensuous image and intellectual concept, which resulted, after a brief debauch of the senses, in a consistent diminution of the role of the senses and the emotions which they feed as co-partners in the work of poetic creation, with a synchronous oversteering of the importance of the intellectual processes.

The effect of this inheritance from Donne upon later poets has been striking. No poet, of course, can reject the testimony of the senses entirely. The school-boy generalization that Pope was quite devoid of imagination is grossly unfair to that genius. The Neo-classicists did not attempt to suppress the sensory image completely; they merely sought to reduce its scope and relative importance. But when the Neo-classic domination had passed and the Romantics sought to free the imagery of English verse from the shackles of a hyper-rationalism, they were strangely incapable of fusing the two elements into a homogeneous whole. They thought and they imaged alternately; the two activities were never joined in one process.

In a review of the poetry of Richard Crashaw, Eliot has cited this fundamental difference between the seventeenth century poet and Shelley:

¹⁰ W. P. Ker, *Essays of John Dryden*. Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1900, Vol. II, p. 258.

Crashaw's images, even when entirely preposterous—for there is no warrant for bringing a pillow [he has cited a figure from *The Teare*] for the head of a tear—give a kind of intellectual pleasure—it is a deliberate conscious perversity of language, a perversity like that of the amazing and amazingly impressive interior of St. Peter's. There is brain work in it. But in *The Skylark* there is no brain work. For the first time perhaps in verse of such eminence, sound exists without sense. Crashaw would never have written so shabby a line as "That from heaven or near it" merely to provide an imperfect rhyme for *spirit*.

... when Shelley has some definite statement to make, he simply says it; keeps his images on one side and his meanings on the other:

We look before and after,
And pine for what is not:
Our sincerest laughter
With some pain is fraught;
Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought.

This is a sweeping assertion, and is rather commonplace in expression; but it is intelligible. And it is not in the least like Crashaw.¹¹

That "dissociation of sensibility" noted by Eliot as a distinguishing trait of subsequent English poetry—a dissociation which had its origin in the seventeenth century but from which the poetry of Crashaw is free—is thrown into bold relief by comparing Crashaw with a poet whose disciple he is usually thought to have been, George Herbert. This statement may sound more than a bit startling to the reader who recalls some of Herbert's most familiar and, in some instances, most outlandish figures:

Have I no harvest but a thorn
To let me bloud, and not restore
What I have lost with cordiall fruit?¹²
— Sweet rose, whose hue angrie and brave
Bids the rash gazer wipe his eye:
Christ left his grave-clothes that we might, when grief
Draws tears or bloud, not want an handkerchief.
Lord, how can man preach the eternall word?
He is a brittle crazie glasse.

But this violent imagery of Herbert's, arresting even when it fails, is not in his prevailing manner, though it be the secret of his strength.

¹¹ "The Poems of Richard Crashaw," *The Dial*, Vol. LXXXIV, No. 3 (March, 1928), p. 249.

¹² The text of this and subsequent quotations from Herbert's poetry is that of George Herbert Palmer's, *The English Works of George Herbert*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1905.

In these lines, and of course in numerous others, the sensuous image supplies the material for the subsequent "brain work," and when the result is a poetic success the sensual and intellectual powers share in the triumph. Too often with Herbert the sensuous imagery disappears before a plodding rationalism. Most obtrusively this rational coloring finds its way into such a poem as *The Church Porch*, but while the crudeness of the argumentative strain met there becomes immediately apparent, the same over-logicality is to be found in much finer poems. It occurs in *The Thanksgiving*, the opening lines of which suggest Crashaw at his best, but which degenerates at the close into trite commonplaces.

Then I will use the works of thy creation
 As if I used them but for fashion.
 The world and I will quarrell, and the yeare
 Shall not perceive that I am here.
 My musick shall finde thee, and ev'ry string
 Shall have his attribute to sing,
 That all together may accord in thee,
 And prove one God, one harmonie.
 If thou shalt give me wit, it shall appeare;
 If thou hast giv'n it me, 'tis here.
 Nay, I will reade thy book and never move
 Till I have found therein thy love,
 Thy art of love, which I'le turn back on thee:
 O my deare Saviour, Victorie!
 Then for thy passion—I will do for that—
 Alas, my God, I know not what.

And it is to be found as a jarring note in the final four stanzas of the fine and familiar *Discipline*:

Throw away thy rod,
 Throw away thy wrath.
 O my God,
 Take the gentle path.

For my heart's desire
 Unto thine is bent.
 I aspire
 To a full content.

Not a word or look
 I affect to own,
 But by book,
 And thy book alone.

JOHN DONNE

Though I fail, I weep.
 Though I halt in pace,
 Yet I creep
 To the throne of grace.

Then let wrath remove.
 Love will do the deed:
 For with love
 Stonie hearts will bleed.

Love is swift of foot.
 Love's a man of warre,
 And can shoot,
 And can hit from farre.

Who can scape his bow?
 That which wrought on thee,
 Brought thee low,
 Needs must work on me.

Throw away thy rod.
 Though man frailties hath,
 Thou art God.
 Throw away thy wrath.

This rationalizing strain, so fatal to the highest imaginative qualities of poetry, was present in Herbert for the same reason that it was present in Donne. The manichaeian spirit was in the air; the Puritan aesthetic, with its acceptance of a "manifest fissure between thought and sensibility" was rising to the ascendancy which it has never since relinquished among English poets. I have alluded to Donne's failure, with scant exceptions, to describe the physical beauty of the beloved in his love-poetry, and I have traced his development of a *genre* of poetry based upon intellectual abstractions to the conviction explicitly stated in his sermons that the flesh is ever a source of pollution and that the sexual instincts are not to be reconciled with the higher spiritual life. The same attitude of mind explains Herbert's similar procedure. For him, too, the flesh is always suspect and woman is always the temptress. Palmer has noted this in the biographical study prefixed to his edition of Herbert's poems,¹³ but more convincing evidence that for Herbert the feminine influence could never be delight "untortured by desire" is to be found in his own words. A significant passage appears in the *Country Parson*,¹⁴ and in

¹³ Cf. Palmer, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 58-59.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 231-232.

poetic form the suspicion of the flesh is made explicit in the final stanza of *H. Baptisme*:

Although by stealth
My flesh get on, yet let her sister,
My soul, bid nothing but preserve her wealth.
The growth of flesh is but a blister;
Childhood is health.

Again, in a sonnet to his mother Herbert protests against the writing of love poetry to women as a tacit dishonoring of God:

Sure, Lord, there is enough in thee to dry
Oceans of Ink; for as the Deluge did
Cover the Earth, so doth thy Majesty;
Each cloud distils thy praise, and doth forbid
Poets to turn it to another use.
Roses and Lilies speak thee; and to make
A pair of Cheeks of them, is thy abuse.
Why should I Women's eyes for Chrystal take?
Such poor invention burns in their low mind
Whose fire is wild, and doth not upward go
To praise, and on thee, Lord, some ink bestow.
Open the bones and you shall nothing find
In the best face but filth; when Lord in Thee
The beauty lies in the discovery.

The deep cleavage on this point between Herbert and Crashaw may be illustrated by comparing Herbert's sonnet, *Love*:

Immortall Love, author of this great frame,
Sprung from that beautie which can never fade,
How hath man parcel'd out thy glorious name
And thrown it on that dust which thou hast made,
While mortall love doth all the title gain!
Which siding with invention, they together
Bear all the sway, possessing heart and brain,
(Thy workmanship) and give thee share in neither.
Wit fancies beautie, beautie raiseth wit.
The world is theirs; they two play out the game,
Thou standing by. And though thy glorious name
Wrought out deliverance from th' infernall pit,
Who sings thy praise? Onely a skarf or glove
Doth warm our hands and make them write of love.

and the familiar concluding lines from Crashaw's "The Flaming Heart":

O thou undaunted daughter of desires!
By all thy dower of Lights & Fires;

By all the eagle in thee, all the doue;
 By all thy liues and deaths of loue;
 By thy larg draughts of intellectual day,
 And by thy thirsts of loue more large than they;
 By all thy brim-fill'd Bowles of feirce desire
 By thy last Morning's draught of liquid fire;
 By the full kingdome of that final kisse
 That seized thy parting Soul, & seal'd thee his;
 By all the heau'ns thou hast in him
 (Fair Sister of the Seraphim)
 By all of Him we haue in Thee;
 Leaue nothing of my Selfe in me.
 Let me so read thy life that I
 Unto all life of mine may dy.

Here the essential thing to be noted is that Herbert always puts the human and Divine love in direct conflict, whereas for Crashaw human love is a stepping stone, a foretaste, of the Divine. This synthesis of human and Divine love, I insist, is not a note original with Crashaw; rather it is a surviving mediaeval characteristic. Crashaw himself had met it in the poetry of St. Theresa and of St. John of the Cross; it was a way of thinking still understandable in the England of the seventeenth century but in the direct descent from the past it occurs in him for the last time.

This prefiguring of Divine Love in terms of the human is only one aspect of Crashaw's exceedingly bold use of sensuous imagery, the aesthetic justification of which rested upon an acceptance of the sacramental idealism of the Middle Ages. Some have found Crashaw's imagery distasteful,¹⁵ but whether artistically successful or the cause of his worst failures, this at least must be said for it; it shows a total obliviousness to the divorce of sense and thought which was appearing in much of the poetry of his time. The truth is that great as was Crashaw's debt to Herbert—and hence to Donne—for inspiration, for technique, even for subject matter, he is a poet of a different world; a realization of this fact has caused Eliot, with customary critical acumen, to suggest that the poetic lineage of Crashaw had not yet been accurately traced:

... Crashaw is quite alone in his peculiar kind of greatness. He is alone among the metaphysical poets of England, who were most intensely English; Crashaw is primarily a European. He was saturated still more in Italian and Latin poetry than in English.¹⁶

¹⁵ Cf. John Smith Harrison, *Platonism in English Poetry*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1903, p. 104.

¹⁶ "The Poems of Richard Crashaw," *The Dial*, Vol. LXXXIV, No. 3 (March 3, 1928), p. 250.

Someone (I think it was F. L. Lucas) has said that it is toward more brain that modern poetry must continue to move, with the sensuous elements steadily declining in importance. If that is to be the destiny of poetry, the *rationale* of the new art must be finally traced to John Donne. Most obtrusively in his own work and in that of Herbert but visibly also in that of his profane followers the separation between thought and sense is to be observed. Indeed only twice since the seventeenth century has the mediaeval aesthetic note been heard in English poets of anything like major stature. In Coventry Patmore's *The Angel in the House*, and particularly in the odes of *The Unknown Eros*, the spirit of Crashaw speaks again. The re-fusing of thought and sense, the presence of the "fundamental brain work" in the image, the suggestion of the mystic prefiguration of the supernatural in the natural—all of these traits of Crashaw's verse are to be found in such lines as these:

The clouds of summer kiss in flame and rain,
And are not found again;
But the heavens themselves eternal are with fire
Of unapproach'd desire,
By the aching heart of Love, which cannot rest,
In blissfullest pathos so indeed possess'd.
O, spousals high;
O, doctrine blest,
Unutterable in even the happiest sigh.

After this, we are not surprised when Francis Thompson, who was made a poet by Patmore, sings with that disarming naïveté which is of the essence of the mediaeval spirit of "the drift of pinions" beating at man's "clay-shuttered doors," and sees "Christ walking on the water, not of Genesareth but Thames." But the echoes of such songs have an alien ring in modern English ears. The ancient homely fusion through a metaphysical synthesis of the seen and unseen worlds—the worlds of spirit and flesh, soul and body, thought and sense—is no longer valid for a way of thinking which considers these practically irreconcilable. With the advent of the modern mood the aesthetics of mediaevalism have disappeared from the main current of English thought, and the new aestheticism of which John Donne was the first deliberate voice is alone in its triumph.

CHAPTER VIII

SUMMARY

THIS STUDY is an attempt to establish Donne's relation to the conflict, current in his generation, between mediaeval and renaissance thought, and to determine the effect, if any, which Donne's suffrages in the situation which confronted him, had upon the subsequent course of English poetry.

The nature of the subject has made necessary a rather complete analysis and evaluation of modern criticism of Donne which has covered a wide range since the revival of this poet was begun by Grosart's edition of the 1870's. So far as my particular problem was concerned the two poles of that criticism were represented, on the one hand by W. J. Courthope and, on the other, by Miss Mary Paton Ramsay, whose French dissertation, *Les doctrines médiévales chez Donne*, appearing in 1917, advanced the rather startling theory that Donne was a true child of the Middle Ages and that he was to be understood only by tracing his origins to their mediaeval sources. The abyss which separates the critical position of Miss Ramsay from that of Courthope is to be explained only by the recognition of the divergence between their respective evaluations of the civilization to which Donne was heir. The heart of that civilization, of course, was the Thomistic philosophy, the resurgence of which has been a notable feature of the twentieth century.

My own position represents a mean between that of Courthope and that of Miss Ramsay. I have not hesitated to say that the former, by facilely reading into Donne and his era the atmosphere of religious panic which prevailed in Victorian England after materialistic science had launched its frontal attack on the Christian faith and the *Essays and Reviews*—and kindred works—had undermined it from within, has scarcely taken an unimpeachable viewpoint. I have insisted that it is a mistake to push Donne's break with mediaeval thought to the point where he is made to appear confused and dismayed by the "new science" of his day; that his interest in that science, particularly in the new astronomy, was rather a popular and poetic interest whereby he caught up new ideas, toyed with them, wove them into the fabric of his poetry, but at no time saw in them a challenge to the stability of traditional Christianity.

But if Courthope erred in one direction, Miss Ramsay, I have felt,

errs in another. She has performed a valuable scholarly service by showing how much of Donne's thought is purely mediaeval. for even at the present day too many critics, particularly in England and America, minimize the extent to which the men of the Renaissance moved in the mediaeval orbit. Nevertheless her insistence on Donne's thorough-going mediaevalism has not seemed to me entirely sound. Oblivious though Donne was to any challenge to the permanence of his philosophical universe in the new heliocentric theories, on another front he did break finally and irretrievably with his mediaeval heritage. It is in the infinitely important matter of aesthetic motivation that Donne rejects the synthesis of Aquinas and casts his lot with the naturalism of the new age.

The heart of the Donne problem is to be found then, I have maintained, in the perturbation and uncertainty which overtook him as he turned from Thomistic thought to the antithesis of that thought in a new-yet-old form. The essence of the Thomistic aesthetic lay in the concept of what Ralph Adams Cram has called the "sacramental" idealism. Through this concept the mediaevalists reconciled for ethical and consequently for artistic purposes the rival claims of flesh and spirit, thought and sense. In the light of the sacramental idealism, the created beauty of the universe with all its manifold appeal to the senses of man is a faint and shadowy reflection of the Divine Beauty which is its source. Thus the mediaeval aesthetic did not attempt to reject nature—it sought rather to supernaturalize it.

The Renaissance, on the contrary, revived a pagan naturalism—not, indeed, the naturalism of the classic world, but a decadent naturalism which flourished in Byzantium with the decline of classical culture. Between the new ideology and the mediaeval aesthetic there could be no compromise for the adherence to the one marked the denial of the other.

The story of Donne's artistic wandering was primarily the story of his attempt—it was an unsuccessful one—to embrace the new paganism. Torn then between the claims of two rival systems of thought, one of which he could not forget and the other of which he fain would have followed, Donne furnishes an example of that fatal internal division of man's powers which, however magnificent his endowments, bars him from supreme achievement. Moreover, out of that tension and strain were born the really distinguishing qualities of Donne's poetry. For its increased intellectualism, its subtlety, its introspective qualities, but above all, its "peculiar blend of

passion and thought" are the product of that travail of spirit which went on in such minds as his when pagan humanism eloquently announced its charms, while of the great metaphysical synthesis only the uneasy recollection of the "mystical and metaphysical cloud" remained.

The feeling that the sensory and the intellectual are not complementary but antagonistic came early in the English Renaissance, but it is in Donne—so much the mediaevalist, yet so deeply and characteristically modern in this all-important aspect of his work—that the processes of the cleavage can be most clearly traced. Certain critics, indeed, notably Professor Grierson, Miss Ramsay, George Williamson, and Louis I. Bredvold, have held that Donne achieved a synthesis between the warring worlds of flesh and spirit. Others, such as Hugh I'Anson Fausset and the Rev. Cyril Tomkinson, have found no such satisfactory resolution of the conflict. This difference of critical opinion can be traced to Donne's own contradictory statements. On occasion (particularly in the sermons) he could be very dogmatic in his insistence on the possibility of a reconciliation between the two sides of man's nature; at other times he could be equally emphatic in his insistence on an unresolvable opposition between soul and body, flesh and spirit. I have adduced evidence which, I think, shows that whatever Donne might formally say upon the subject the unity of of the mediaeval aesthetic vision was alien to him, while at the same time he was never at ease with the naturalistic aesthetic.

With the failure to find aesthetic satisfaction in Renaissance naturalism came an inevitable consequence. This was a revulsion from that which had once attracted him so powerfully. The result was the artistic aridity of the religious poems.

In this connection the treatment of Donne's mysticism was incapable. I have dared to say, contrary to formidable critical opinion, that Donne was not a mystic—that he would not have been considered such either by his age or by himself. I have based this contention on the fact that mysticism as it was understood in Donne's time had little in common with the mysticism of modern times which is all too commonly a dilettante avocation eschewing both intellect and sense and taking refuge in a vague cloud-land of emotion and hysteria. Mediaeval mysticism had no thought of ejecting either intellect or sense from its scheme of things. What it did insist on was the possibility of transcending both—the possibility of attaining a union more

intimate than either intellect or sense can suggest with the Divine Source of all truth. But that transcendental glimpse of Reality was for it a divine gift which did not nullify experience but which marked rather a seeing face to face what the natural powers of man saw only darkly. Mediaeval mysticism, like the mediaeval aesthetic, was founded on the Thomistic synthesis of flesh and spirit; the same reasons which caused Donne to break with the latter precluded his adherence to the former.

That Donne provides a definite link between the Elizabethans and the Neo-classicists and through them with the nineteenth century has been my final contention. The divorce between intellect and sense which is so evident in Donne's late religious poetry is not accidental. The validity of the mediaeval synthesis of flesh and spirit having been denied and the new naturalism having been found unsatisfactory, the only alternative was to rely on the intellect as the sole contributor to the work of poetic creation. The rationalization of the poetic process begun by Donne continued with his followers. It is perhaps even more evident in Herbert than in Donne himself and it is shared by the other metaphysicals. Moreover, the divorce between the powers of mind and sense so significantly revealed in Donne in the seventeenth century has remained a permanent trait of the great body of English poetry since his time.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

EARLY EDITIONS OF DONNE

- Poems, By J. D. with elegies on the authors death.* London: Printed by M. F. for John Marriot, 1633, 1635, 1639.
- Poems, &c, by John Donne, late Dean of St. Pauls.* . . . In the Savoy: Printed by T. N. for Henry Herringman, 1669.
- Pseudo-Martyr.* . . . London: Printed by W. Stansby for Walter Burre, 1610.
- Encaenia. The feast of dedication.* . . . London: Printed by Aug. Mat. for Thomas Jones, 1623.
- Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions.* . . . The Third Edition. London: Printed for Thomas Jones, 1626.
- Biathanatos.* . . . London: Printed by John Dawson, ca. 1646.
- Biathanatos.* . . . London: Printed for Humphrey Moseley, 1648.
- Paradoxes, Problemes, Essayes, Characters* . . . also *Ignatius his Conclave.* . . . London: Printed by T. N. for Humphrey Moseley, 1652.
- Letters to severall persons of honour.* . . . London: Printed by J. Flesher for Richard Marriot, 1651.
- Letters to several persons of honour.* . . . London: Printed by J. Flesher, 1654.
- LXXX Sermons.* . . . London: Printed for Richard Royston and Richard Marriot, 1640.

MODERN EDITIONS OF DONNE

- ALFORD, HENRY, *The Works of John Donne.* 6 vols. London: John W. Parker, 1839.
- CHAMBERS, E. K., *Poems of John Donne.* 2 vols. London: Lawrence & Bullen, 1896.
- GOSSE, EDMUND, *The Life and Letters of John Donne.* 2 vols. London: William Heinemann, 1899.
- MERRILL, C. S., JR., *Letters to Several Persons of Honour.* New York, 1910.
- GRIERSON, H. J. C., *The Poems of John Donne.* 2 vols. Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1912.
- SMITH, LOGAN PEARSALL, *Donne's Sermons: Selected Passages.* Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1920.
- SPARROW, JOHN, *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions.* Cambridge: At the the University Press, 1923.
- HAYWARD, JOHN, *John Donne Dean of St. Paul's Complete Poetry and Selected Prose.* Bloomsbury: The Nonesuch Press, 1929.
- Biathanatos.* Reproduced from the first edition. New York: The Facsimile Text Society, 1930.
- Juvenilia, or Certain Paradoxes and Problems.* The Facsimile Text Society. New York: Columbia University Press, 1936.

BIOGRAPHY, CRITICISM, AND GENERAL WORKS

- ADAMS, HENRY, *Mont-Saint Michel and Chartres*. Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1927.
- ALIGHIERI, DANTE, *Paradiso*. London: J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., 1926.
- , *Vita Nuova*, with Rossetti's Version. Edited by H. Oelsner. London: Chatto & Windus, 1908.
- AQUINAS, ST. THOMAS, *Summa Theologica*. Tom. Quint. Parisiis, 1887.
- Aucassin and Nicolette*. Everyman edition. London: J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1919.
- AUGUSTINE, SAINT, *The City of God*. Tr. by the Rev. Marcus Dods. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1888.
- , *Confessions*. New York: D. & J. Sadlier & Co., 1890.
- BELLOC, HILAIRE, *Milton*. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1935.
- BENNET, JOAN, *Four Metaphysical Poets*. Cambridge: At the University Press, 1934.
- BERDYAEV, NICOLAI, *The End Of Our Time*. New York: Sheed & Ward Inc., 1933.
- BREDVOLD, LOUIS I., "The Naturalism of Donne in Relation to Some Renaissance Traditions," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*. Vol. XXII (1923), pp. 471-502.
- , "The Religious Thought of Donne in Relation to Medieval and Later Traditions," *Studies in Shakespeare, Milton, and Donne*. University of Michigan Publications, Language and Literature, Vol. I. New York and London: Macmillan Company, 1925.
- BRODERICK, JAMES, S. J., *The Life and Work of Blessed Robert Francis Bellarmine, S.J. 1542-1621*. 2 vols. London: Burns Oates and Washbourne, Ltd., 1928.
- BURDACH, KONRAD, *Reformation, Renaissance, Humanismus*. Berlin: Verlag von Gebrüder Paetel, 1918.
- CAREW, THOMAS, *The Poems of Thomas Carew*. Edited by W. C. Hazlitt. London: Printed for the Roxburghe Library, 1870.
- CHESTERTON, G. K., *The Ballad of the White Horse*. New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1931.
- , *Chaucer*. London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1932.
- , *St. Thomas*. London: Hodder & Stoughton Limited, 1933.
- COFFIN, CHARLES MONROE, *John Donne and the New Philosophy*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1937.
- COLERIDGE, SAMUEL TAYLOR, *Table Talk, The Complete Works*. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1868.
- COURTHOPE, W. J., *A History of English Poetry*. Vol. 3. London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1903.
- COWLEY, ABRAHAM, *Poems*. Edited by A. R. Waller. Cambridge: At the University Press, 1905.
- CRAM, RALPH ADAMS, *The Great Thousand Years*. Boston: Marshall Jones Company, 1918.
- , *The Substance of Gothic*. Boston: Marshall Jones Company, 1917.

- CRASHAW, RICHARD, *The Poems of Richard Crashaw*. Edited by L. C. Martin. Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1927.
- DAWSON, CHRISTOPHER, "Christianity and Sex," *Enquiries into Religion and Culture*. New York: Sheed & Ward, 1937.
- , "Christianity and the New Age," *Essays in Order*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1931.
- DEQUINCEY, THOMAS, *The Collected Writings of Thomas DeQuincey*. Vol. 10. Edited by David Masson. Edinburgh: A. & C. Black, 1889-90.
- DEWULF, MAURICE, *History of Mediaeval Philosophy*. 2 vols. New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1926.
- , *Philosophy and Civilization in the Middle Ages*. Princeton: University Press, 1922.
- DOWDEN, EDWARD, "The Poetry of John Donne," *The Fortnightly Review*, O. S., Vol. LIII (1890), pp. 791-808.
- DRYDEN, JOHN, *The Poetical Works of John Dryden*. Cambridge edition. Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1908.
- ELIOT, T. S., "Donne In Our Time," *A Garland for John Donne 1631-1931*. Edited by Theodore Spencer. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1931.
- , "The Poems of Richard Crashaw," *The Dial*, Vol. LXXXIV, No. 3. (March, 1928), pp. 246-250.
- , *Selected Essays, 1917-1932*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1932.
- FAUSSET, HUGH P'ANSON, *John Donne, A Study in Discord*. London: Jonathan Cape Ltd., 1924.
- FLETCHER, J. B., *Literature of the Italian Renaissance*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1934.
- GOSSE, EDMUND, *The Life and Letters of John Donne*. 2 vols. London: William Heinemann, 1899.
- GRIERSON, H. J. C., *Cross-Currents in English Literature of the XVIIth Century*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1929.
- , *The First Half of the Seventeenth Century*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1906.
- , "John Donne," *The Cambridge History of English Literature*. Vol. IV, Ch. XI. Edited by A. W. Ward and A. R. Waller. Cambridge: At the University Press, 1909.
- , *Metaphysical Lyrics & Poems of the Seventeenth Century, Donne to Butler*. Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1921.
- HALDANE, E. S., *The Wisdom and Religion of a German Philosopher*. London: Kegan, Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd., 1897.
- HARRISON, JOHN SMITH, *Platonism in English Poetry*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1903.
- HEFELE, H., "Zum Begriff der Renaissance," *Historisches Jahrbuch*, Vol. XLIX (1929), pp. 444-459.
- HODGSON, GERALDINE E., *English Mystics*. London: A. R. Mowbray & Co., Ltd., 1922.

- HUGHES, MERRITT Y., "Kidnapping Donne," *Essays in Criticism: Second Series*. University of California Press, 1934.
- , "The Lineage of 'The Extasie,'" *Modern Language Review*, Vol. XXVII (1932), pp. 1-5.
- HULME, T. E., *Speculations*. London: Kegan, Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd., New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, Inc. 1924.
- HUSAIN, ITRAT, *The Dogmatic and Mystical Theology of John Donne*. London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1938.
- JESSOPP, AUGUSTUS, *John Donne*. Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1897.
- JOHN OF THE CROSS, ST., *The Complete Works of Saint John of the Cross*. 3 vols. Tr. by E. Allison Peers. London: Burns Oates & Washbourne, Ltd., 1934.
- JOHNSON, SAMUEL, *The Works of the English Poets*. Vol. I. London: 1790.
- JONSON, BEN, *Epigrams, The Forest, Underwoods*. The Facsimile Text Society. New York: Columbia University Press, 1936.
- KEMPIS, THOMAS À., *Opera Omnia*. Edited by Michael Josephus Pohl. Vol. II. Friburgi Brisigavorum: Herder, 1902-1905.
- KER, W. P., *Essays of John Dryden*. 2 vols. Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1900.
- KEYNES, GEOFFREY, *A Bibliography of Dr. John Donne*. Cambridge: At the University Press, 1932.
- KING, HENRY, *The English Poems of Henry King*. Edited by Lawrence Mason. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1914.
- LEGOUIS, PIERRE, *Donne the Craftsman*. Paris: Henri Didier, 1928.
- LEISHMAN, J. B., *The Metaphysical Poets, Donne, Herbert, Vaughan, Traherne*. Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1934.
- LEWIS, C. S., "Donne and Love Poetry in the Seventeenth Century," *Seventeenth Century Studies Presented to Sir Herbert Grierson*. Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1938.
- LINDSAY, JACK, "Donne and Giordano Bruno," *The London Times, Literary Supplement*, July 11, 1936, p. 580.
- LOVELACE, RICHARD, *The Poems of Richard Lovelace*. Edited by C. H. Wilkinson. Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1930.
- MARITAIN, JACQUES, *Art et Scolastique*. Troisième édition revue et corrigée. Paris: Louis Rouart et Fils, éditeurs, 1925.
- , *Frontières de la Poésie*. Paris: Louis Rouart et Fils, éditeurs, n.d.
- , *Three Reformers*. London: Sheed & Ward, 1928.
- MARVELL, ANDREW, *The Poems & Letters of Andrew Marvell*. Edited by H. M. Margoliouth. Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1927.
- MORE, DAME GERTRUDE, *The Inner Life And The Writings of Dame Gertrude More*. Revised and edited by Dom Benedict Weld-Blundell. 2 vols. London: R. & T. Washbourne, Ltd., 1911.
- NETHERCOT, A. H., "The Reputation of the 'Metaphysical Poets' During the Age of Johnson and 'The Romantic Revival,'" *Studies in Philology*. Vol. XXII (Jan., 1925), pp. 81-132.

- NEWMAN, JOHN HENRY, *The Idea of a University*. London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1896.
- NICOLSON, MARJORIE, "Cosmic Voyages," *Journal of English Literary History*, Vol. VII (1940), pp. 83-107.
- , "Kepler, *The Somnium*, and John Donne," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. I (1940), pp. 259-280.
- , "Milton and the Telescope," *Journal of English Literary History*, Vol. II (1935), pp. 1-32.
- , "The 'New Astronomy' and English Literary Imagination," *Studies in Philology*, Vol. XXXII (1935), pp. 429-462.
- , "A World in the Moon," *Smith College Studies in Modern Language*, Vol. XVIII (1936), pp. 1-72.
- PALMER, GEORGE HERBERT, *The English Works of George Herbert*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1905.
- PATMORE, COVENTRY, "Aurea Dicta," *The Rod, The Root, And The Flower*. 2nd edition revised. London: L. Bell and Sons Ltd., 1923.
- , *Poems*. London: George Bell and Son, 1894.
- PLATO, *The Works of Plato*. Translated by Benjamin Jowett. New York: The Dial Press, n.d.
- PRAZ, MARIO, "Donne's Relation to the Poetry of His Time," *A Garland for John Donne 1631-1931*. Edited by Theodore Spencer. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1931.
- , *The Romantic Agony*. Tr. by Angus Davidson. London: Oxford University Press, 1933.
- , *Secentismo e Marinismo in Inghilterra*. Firenze, 1925.
- RAMSAY, MARY PATON, *Les doctrines médiévales chez Donne le poète métaphysicien de l'Angleterre 1573-1631*. Deuxième édition. London: Oxford University Press, 1924.
- RUSKIN, JOHN, "Pre-Raphaelitism," *The Works of John Ruskin*. Library edition, Vol. XII. London: George Allen, 1904.
- , *The Stones of Venice*. New York: Merrill and Baker, n.d.
- SAINTSBURY, GEORGE, *Minor Poets of the Caroline Period*. 3 vols. Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1905.
- SANTAYANA, GEORGE, *Three Philosophical Poets*, Vol. 6, *The Works of George Santayana*. Triton edition. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1926.
- SIMPSON, EVELYN M., "Donne's Paradoxes and Problems," *A Garland for John Donne 1631-1931*. Edited by Theodore Spencer. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1931.
- , *A Study of the Prose Works of John Donne*. Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1924.
- SPENSER, EDMUND, *Minor Poems*. Edited by Ernest De Selincourt. Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1910.
- SPINGARN, J. E., *Critical Essays of the Seventeenth Century*. 3 vols. Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1908.
- SYMONDS, JOHN ADDINGTON, *Renaissance in Italy: The Fine Arts*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1888.

- SYMONS, ARTHUR, "John Donne," *Figures of Several Centuries*. London: Constable and Company, Ltd., 1916.
- TAYLOR, A. E., *Philosophical Studies*. London: Macmillan and Company, Ltd., 1934.
- TAYLOR, HENRY OSBORN, *The Mediaeval Mind*. . . . 2 vols. 4th edition. London: Macmillan and Company, Ltd., 1927.
- , *Thought and Expression in the Sixteenth Century*. 2 vols. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1920.
- TAYLOR, RACHEL ANNAND, *Aspects of the Italian Renaissance*. Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1923.
- THERESA OF AVILA, SAINT, *Le château intérieur*, Tome Troisième, *Oeuvres de Sainte Thérèse*. Traduites par le P. Marcel Bouix, S.J. Neuvième édition. Paris: Librairie Victor Lecoffre, 1913.
- , *Vie de Sainte Thérèse*. Traduite par le P. Marcel Bouix, S.J. Seizième édition. Paris: Librairie Victor Lecoffre, 1910.
- THODE, HENRY, *Saint François d'Assise et les origines de l'art de la Renaissance en Italie*. Édition revue. Tr. by Gaston Lefevre. Paris: Librairie Renouard, Henri Laurens, Editeur.
- TOMKINSON, REV. CYRIL, "A Note On the Personal Religion of Dr. Donne," *The Bookman*, Vol. LXXIX (March, 1931), pp. 345-346.
- TURBERVILLE, A. S., "Changing Views of the Renaissance," *History*, Vol. XVI (1932), pp. 289-297.
- UNDERHILL, EVELYN, *Mysticism*. New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, 1911.
- VAN DOREN, MARK, *The Poetry of John Dryden*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Howe, 1920.
- VAUGHAN, HENRY, *The Poems of Henry Vaughan*. Edited by E. K. Chambers. The Muses Library. 2 vols. London: George Routledge & Sons, Ltd., 1896.
- WALTON, IZAAK, *Lives*. Boston: William Veazie. New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1865.
- WENDELL, BARRETT, *The Temper of The Seventeenth Century in English Literature*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1904.
- WILLIAMSON, GEORGE, *The Donne Tradition*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1930.
- , "Mutability, Decay and Seventeenth Century Melancholy," *Journal of English Literary History*, Vol. II (1935), pp. 121-150.
- , "Textual Difficulties in the Interpretation of Donne's Poetry," *Modern Philology*, Vol. XXXVIII (1940), pp. 37-72.
- WILLY, BASIL, *The Seventeenth Century Background*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1934.
- WILSON, F. P., "Notes on the Early Life of John Donne," *Review of English Studies*, Vol. III (1927), pp. 272-279.
- WUST, PETER, "Crisis in the West," *Essays in Order*. New York: The Macmillan Co., 1931.
- YATES, FRANCES A., *A Study of Love's Labour's Lost*. Cambridge: At the University Press, 1936.

INDEX

Adams, Henry, 71, 72, 95, 110
 Alighieri, Dante, 93, 94, 97-98, 98-99
 Aquinas, Thomas, St., 52, 55-56, 79, 89, 175-176
Aucassin and Nicolette, 96
 Augustine, St., 74-75, 84, 121, 174
 Belloc, Hilaire, 16-17, 147
 Bennet, Joan, 124
 Berdyaev, Nicolai, 100
 Bernard, St., 98
Biathanatos, 33, 158
 Bredvold, L  ouis I., 50, 62, 114-115, 138, 167
 Brodrick, James, S. J., 52
 Burdach, Konrad, 47, 82, 84, 100-101
 Carlyle, Thomas, 94
 Chesterton, G. K., 80, 85, 86, 91, 173
 Coffin, Charles Monroe, 50
 Coleridge, Samuel Taylor, 126
 Copernicus, Nicholas, 53
 Courthope, W. J., 48, 105-106, 143
 Cram, Ralph Adams, 71-72, 77, 81
 Crashaw, Richard, 207-208
 Dawson, Christopher, 72, 76
 DeQuincey, Thomas, 26
 de Wulf, Maurice, 53
 Donne, John, *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions*, 189, 190-191, 193
Essays in Divinity, 186-187, 187-188
Ignatius his Conclave, 57-58, 180-181
Letters, 27, 28, 29, 32-33, 36, 40-41, 44, 54-55, 56-57, 64-65
Pseudo-Martyr, 35, 116, 120, 183, 184
Sermons, 62, 65-66, 67, 116-117, 117-118, 121-122, 126-127, 180, 182, 183, 184

POETRY:

Aire and Angels, 160-161
An Anatomie of the World, 58, 59, 60, 65, 109
The Baite, 134
The Calme, 130
The Canonization, 130
Confined Love, 135
The Crosse, 37-38
The Dreame, 131, 151-152
Elegie IV, 129
Elegie VIII, 66
Elegie IX, 138
Elegie XII, 129, 130
Elegie XVI, 130, 158-159
Elegie on the Lady Marckham, 55
The Extasie, 131, 137, 181
A Fever, 153
The Funerall, 122, 131
Goodfriday, 1613. *Riding Westward*, 61
The Indifferent, 155-156
La Corona sonnets, 162
A Letter to the Lady Carey, and Mrs. Essex Riche, from Amyens, 64
The Litanie, 36-37, 116
Lovers infinitenesse, 145
Loves Alchymie, 66
Loves exchange, 135
The Message, 152-153
Negative love, 157
A Nocturnall Upon S. Lucies day, 123
Obsequies to the Lord Harrington, 133
The Progresse of the Soule, 56, 108, 132
The Relique, 122, 131, 137
Satyres, 130, 140-141
The Second Anniversarie, 60-61, 119, 133
Song, 135, 136-137
Sonnet. The Token, 135-136

- Donne, John—poetry (*cont'd*)
Holy Sonnets, 43, 132, 144-145, 163
To Sr. Henry Goodyere, 118
To Sr. Henry Wotton, 64
To the Countesse of Bedford, 63, 65, 119
The triple foole, 135
The Undertaking, 159-160
A Valediction: forbidding mourning, 130-131, 181-182
A Valediction: of my name, in the window, 123
The Will, 131
Woman's Constancy, 155
Dowden, Edward, 123
Dryden, John, 127, 203
- Eliot, T. S., 7, 8, 109-110, 150-151, 196, 199, 200-201, 204, 208
Essex, Earl of, 22, 23, 25, 26
- Fausset, Hugh l'Anson, 115, 126, 202
Flaubert, Gustave, 77
Fletcher, J. B., 102
Francis of Assisi, St., 93, 94, 103, 183
- Gosse, Sir Edmund, *The Life and Letters of John Donne*, 18, 20-21, 23, 24, 25-26, 30, 33-34, 38-39, 43, 45, 46, 141, 161, 165-166, 185, 186
Grierson, H. J. C., 20, 26-27, 49, 58, 105, 111, 112-113, 120, 127, 143, 146, 149, 150, 162, 197
- Haldane, E. S., 179
Hayward, John, 40
Hefele, Hans, 104
Hegel, G. W. F., 179
Herbert, George, 204, 205-206, 207
Heywood, Jasper, 16, 19, 25
Hodgson, Geraldine, 175
Hughes, Merritt Y., 50, 146
- Hulme, T. E., 14
Husain, Itrait, 141-142
- Jessopp, Augustus, 19, 21, 33
John of the Cross, St., 174-175
Johnson, Samuel, 127
- Kempis, Thomas à, 175
- Legouis, Pierre, 146
Leishman, J. B., 156
Lewis, C. S., 157
Lincoln's Inn, 20, 42
Lindsay, Jack, 50
- Maritain, Jacques, 87-88, 89-90, 92, 93, 99, 107, 170-171
Marlowe, Christopher, 134
Milton, John, 132
More, Dame Gertrude, 190, 191, 193-194
- Neri, St. Philip, 184
Nethercott, A. H., 9
Newman, John Henry, 95-96
Nicolson, Marjorie, 52, 57, 59, 62
- Patmore, Coventry, 89, 145, 179, 209
Paul, St., 74
Petrarchianism, 134
Plato, 82, 83-84
Praz, Mario, 50, 146, 179
- Ramsay, Mary Paton, 15, 50-51, 54, 68, 105, 112, 114, 166-167
Ruskin, John, 70, 99-100
- Santayana, George, 108
Shapiro, I. A., 20
Simpson, Evelyn M., 30-31, 49, 108, 121, 147, 168-169
Sparrow, John, 146
Spenser, Edmund, 154
Swinburne, A. C., 86
Symonds, John Addington, 92, 93, 125, 147
Symons, Arthur, 111-112, 147

- Taylor, A. E., 7-8
Taylor, Henry Osborn, 90-91, 94,
102
Taylor, Rachel Annand, 144, 148
Theresa of Avila, St., 176, 177
Thode, Henry, 102
Tomkinson, Reverend Cyril, 116
Turberville, A. S., 104

Underhill, Evelyn, 172, 173-174,
178-179

Walton, Izaak, 19, 21, 29-30, 34, 42,
188-189
Willey, Basil, 99
Williamson, George, 9, 50, 60, 61,
114, 123-124, 151, 167-168,
196, 198, 199-200
Wilson, F. P., 15, 19
Wust, Peter, 84-85

Yates, Frances A., 68

Date Due		
DEC 15 '62		
JAN 3 '63		
MAR 10 '63		
APR 15 '63		
MAY 10 '63		
JUN 20 '63		
JUN 25 '63		
NOV 20 '63		
DEC 10 '63		
MAR 10 '64		
APR 10 '64		
MAY 10 '64		
NOV 10 1964		



PR2248 .M72
John Donne, his flight from

Princeton Theological Seminary-Speer Library



1 1012 00005 1484